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**SRIKRISHNA**  
**HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS**

BY

**DHIRENDRA NATH PAL**

*Author of the History of the Hindu Religion etc., etc.*

FIFTH EDITION

AS-58386

18 MAR 1932

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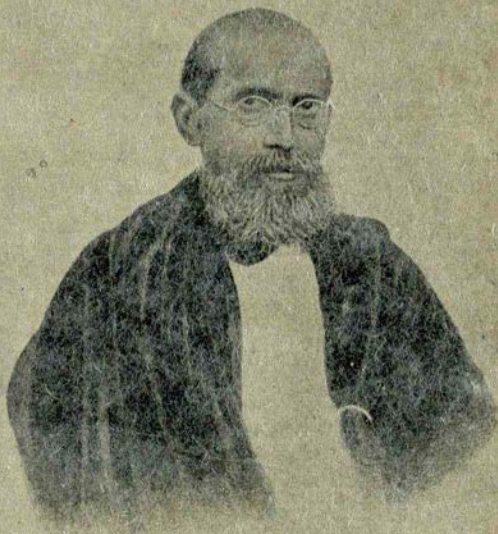
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*Shivaram Lal*

THE AUTHOR



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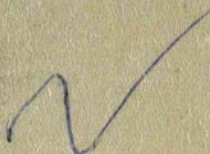
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**MOST RESPECTFULLY**

**DEDICATED**

**WITH**

**Her Highness's Gracious Permission**

**TO**

**Her Highness the Maharani-Regent**

**OF**

**MYSORE, C.I.**

**BY**

**Her Highness's Humble Servant**

**THE AUTHOR**



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## GRATITUDE

My thanks are due to those great scholars and writers whose works I have consulted and from whose works I have derived a considerable help. I have consulted about one thousand works, therefore it would be a long list to name them all. It would be also invidious to mention some and leave others. I, therefore, tender my best thanks to one and all of them, though I do not mention them each by name. Without their most valuable help, it would have been impossible for me to write this work. India and India's people will ever remain deeply indebted to these great men.

THE AUTHOR



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# SRIKRISHNA

## PROLOGUE

It is due to the very kind encouragement that my countrymen and many eminent European gentlemen were pleased to extend towards my work that I have been able so soon to bring out a Second Edition.

I have a word to say about the spelling of the proper names and Sanskrit words used in this work. In fact no universal standard of orthography exists in spelling Sanskrit words. They are spelt differently by different oriental scholars. As this work is intended for the people, I have spelt the words in a way as it would be easy for them to pronounce. I know the proper way of putting the name of the subject of my narrative is *Sree Krishna* but I have made it *Srikrishna* to make it easier to pronounce. I have followed this rule all through this work, and I hope I shall be excused for it by the scholars.





## PROLOGUE

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I place the Second Edition of my humble work before the public with the hope that it will receive from them the same generous reception as they were so kind to bestow upon its First Edition.

*The Author*



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## PREFATORY NOTE

## PART I

This little work is an humble attempt to write an account of the life and career of Srikrishna on an historical basis. He is on the one hand worshipped and adored by millions of men as an Incarnation of God, while on the other he is considered by the great oriental scholars of Europe to be a myth,—a creation of poesy. None has been ever so misunderstood or misjudged. The greatest of all men ever born is now made to appear in a thousand and one light, for hundreds of poets have painted him, as each of them believed him to be. Thus the world has been deprived of knowing one whose wonderful career and more wonderful teachings should be read, studied and followed by the entire human race.

The account of his life and career now lies buried in a mass of ancient Sanskrit literature. Though some eminent scholars of Europe have explored this vast sea of the Hindu lore and embodied their thought in



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works of great merit, researches and scholarship, yet they are but little read by the general public. They remain confined exclusively to the scholars and students. It is for the first time that an humble attempt has been made in this little work to paint Krishna as he really was and to place him before the modern world in its reigning language and in as popular a form as possible. We do not know how far we have been able to attain success, but we sincerely hope we shall be favoured with a patient hearing, and shall not be denied the kind patronage of the generous public.

## PART II

In placing the Second Part of my humble work before the public, I have very little to say except that I sincerely hope they will kindly peruse this little book. India's greatest Man and God is Srikrishna :—India's greatest Religion and Faith is Srikrishna :—nay Srikrishna is the Loftiest Ideal of the world ; He is the greatest source of Universal Brotherhood and Ever-lasting Felicity. Therefore I earnestly and most sincerely ask all my readers





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to put aside their preconceived misconceptions and prejudices and read this humble work.

I humbly beg to state that I have written nothing in this book that is my own, nor have I created a new Krishna out of my fancy. I have humbly tried to unearth the great Krishna who now lies buried under a mass of fiction with which the Puranas and the Mahavarata have been filled up by subsequent writers in the course of many hundreds of years. By putting the searching light of history, analysis and logic, it would not be difficult for any of my readers, if they care to wade through the great sea of the Sanskrit lore, to find out which portions of it are fictions and stories and which are after-interpolations. Krishna, as delineated in this little book, I humbly believe, is Krishna of the original Puranas and the Mahavarata, and Krishna as he really was. Let not my readers form hasty conclusions; let them study the great life and career of the most wonderful Man,—if man could possibly rise to be so high,—of the world with all seriousness, with all attention and care, with all devotion; let them try to appreciate and grasp and feel the inconceivable character of Srikrishna, and I have not the least doubt, they would cry as did Arjuna on the holy field of Kurukshetra.



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"My salutation to you in front ; my salutation to you from behind, my salutation to you from every side. You are immeasurable, you are inconceivable ; you are all."

I tender my best thanks to all those great scholars and literary men who have so kindly encouraged me by their flattering letters. My best thanks are also due to those of my eminent countrymen and great Englishmen who have kindly purchased copies of my work.

THE AUTHOR



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BEFORE we ask our readers to go through these pages, we believe we are bound to answer the following queries.

1. *Is Srikrishna a historical personage?*
2. *If so, when was he born?*
3. *Are there any adequate materials out of which an account of his life and career may be written on an historical basis?*
4. *If so, what are they?*

Innumerable works have been written on the life and teachings of Srikrishna in the various languages of India, but they are all works of poesy and fiction. No attempt has hitherto been made to write his life and career on a really historical basis. Poets have painted him as they believed him to be. None has ever taken the trouble to find out what he really was by diving deep into the mass of fictions underneath which he now lies buried. Therefore in writing a biography of Srikrishna,





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we have to face a difficulty which is perhaps too great to overcome. On the one hand, our orthodox countrymen believe in every word that is written in those ancient Sanskrit works in which his life and career are narrated,—and on the other, those great Oriental scholars of Europe who have explored the vast sea of Sanskrit literature declare that Krishna is but a myth, or at the most, the story of his life is but an allegory. We shall not enter into a controversy. It is very difficult to come to any definite conclusions in matters of the remotest antiquity. We shall, therefore, place simply some facts before our readers, asking them to form their own opinion. But we most earnestly request them to peruse these pages in an impartial spirit, being neither driven to any definite conclusions by the glare of the Oriental scholarship of Europe, nor being too prejudiced to believe that all that is written in Sanskrit is but truth.

We shall undertake in this work to dig up the grand statue of a great personage, that has, in the course of many thousands of years, been buried deep underneath the earth. We are happy to say that our task is not hopeless. We shall be able to place before our readers a really historical account of the



life and teachings of Srikrishna, whom we believe to be the Greatest and the Grandest Man that was ever born in this world.

There are at least ten thousand works in the various Indian languages that contain the story of Srikrishna, either in songs and sonnets, or in poems and dramas. But we can very well pass them by, and come to those very ancient works from which their authors have got their inspiration. They are : (1) the *Mahavarata*, (2) the *Harivansa*, and (3) the *Puranas*.

THE Puranas are a stupendous mass of literature.

The Puranas      The following eighteen are supposed to be the chief Puranas,

- (1) Vishnu, (2) Vagavata, (3) Narada,  
(4) Gadura, (5) Padma, (6) Baraha,  
(7) Brahma, (8) Brahmanda, (9) Brahma-  
Vaivarta, (10) Markendeya, (11) Bhavishya,  
(12) Vamana, (13) Vayu, (14) Linga,  
(15) Skanda, (16) Agni, (17) Matsya, and  
(18) Kurma.

Besides these eighteen chief Puranas, there are more than twenty-six Upa-Puranas, such as :—(1) Sanatkumara, (2) Nrisinha, (3) Brihat-Naradiya, (4) Siva, (5) Durvasa, (6) Kapila, (7) Manava, (8) Aisanas, (9) Varuna, (10) Kalika, (11) Samvava,



(12) Nandi, (13) Soura, (14) Parasara,  
(15) Aditya, (16) Maheswara, (17) Vargava,  
(18) Vasista, (19) Vavishya, (20) Bramhandiya,  
(21) Kourma, (22) Adi, (23) Mudgala,  
(24) Kalki, (25) Vavishattara, (26) Vrihadharma,  
and so on.

If all these Puranas and Upa-Puranas are collected and printed, they would be many cart-loads of printed matter. But it is the universal belief in India that the chief eighteen Puranas, if not all the Upa-Puranas, were written by the great sage Vyasa who compiled the Vedas. The following *Slokas*, quoted at random from some of the Puranas, will show that such contradictory statements cannot be made by one and the same person.

Padma Purana, Uttara Khanda, 78th Chapter, says:—

*"He who, out of ignorance, worships any other god except Vishnu, becomes a wretch. It is not proper to adore any other except Vishnu. The ignorant Brahman who takes but once the remnants of the offerings to Siva becomes a Chandala. He is burnt in hell for eternity."*

But Kurma Purana, 20th Chapter says:—

*"He who abuses Siva destroys his Dhyana and Homa, Knowledge and Sacrifice."*





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In Linga Purana, Chapter 17th, Sloka 3, Siva says :—

*"This Grand-sire of all creatures, Brahma, was born of my right side, and this Soul of the universe, Vishnu, rose from my left side."*

But Vishnu Purana, Part I., Chapter 7th, Sloka 10, says :—

*"Rudra (Siva), as effulgent as the mid-day sun, was produced from his (Brahma's) frowned forehead, having been blazed up in the fire of his anger."*

So far as regards the Puranas being written by one person.

And again the Puranas that we now possess are not exactly those that were extant at least before the sixth century A. D., when the great lexicographer, Amara Sinha, the contemporary of Kalidasa, flourished.\* He says in his great Dictionary, "The Puranas have five Characteristics." His commentators thus define these five Characteristics :—

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\* See Asiatic Researches, Vol. I., pp. 286-87, and Col. A. Cunningham's Archaeological Survey Report, published in the Supplementary Number of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1863, pp. VII-X.



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*The creation, the special creation, the histories of families, the accounts of different ages, and the stories of great men,—these are the five Characteristics of the Puranas."*

But except Vishnu Purana, none of the present Puranas have these five Characteristics.

In the Matsya Purana, we get the following description of Brahma-Vaivarta Purana :—

*"The Purana, which is recited before Narada by Savarni and which contains the glory of Krishna, the accounts of Rathantara Kalpa, and the story of Brahma Varaha in eighteen thousand slokas, is called Brahma-Vaivarta."*

But the present Brahma-Vaivarta Purana does not contain the accounts of the *Rathantara Kalpa*, or the story of *Brahma Varaha*. Besides, it does not contain any mention of its being recited by Savarni before Narada. Thus it is quite evident that the old Brahma-Vaivarta is lost, and it has been replaced by the present one.

In this way we find the present puranas are all but collections of the ancient record which have passed through many addition and alterations in the course of many hundred of years. The "Purana" has been in existence in India from the earliest days ; but it is now



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The Vagavata also in its 4-6 Slokas, Chapter III., Skanda X, says :—

*“Aruni, Kashyapa, Savarni, Akritavarna, Sansapayana, and Harita are the six Pouranikas (learned in the Puranas). They learnt the Purana from my father who was the pupil of Vyasa. After studying the original (Purana) Sanhita, they each wrote a separate (Purana) Sanhita &c.”*

The great commentator of the Vagavata, Sridhara Swami, in commenting on its 6th Sloka of the 7th Chapter, 12th Skanda, says ;—

*“At first Vyasa wrote six Sanhitas, and taught them to my father, Lomaharsana. From him Aruni and others learnt each one Sanhita. I am their pupil ; from me Rurba has learnt them.”*

Agni Purana also says :—

*“The Suta Lomaharsana received the Purana from Vyasa. Sumati, Agnibarcha, Mitrayu, Sansapayana, Sritavrata, and Savarni became his pupils. Sansapayana and others wrote the Purana Sanhitas.”*

Thus we find Vyasa wrote *only one Purana*, and his pupils after him wrote several other works based on it.





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But what subjects did this original Purana treat of? The 16th Sloka of the Vishnu Purana, Part III., Chapter VI., fully explains it.

It says :—

*“Vyasa, learned in the Vedas, wrote a Purana Sanhita with Akhyana, Upakhyana, Gatha, and Kalpasuddhi.”*

The commentator of the Vishnu Purana thus explains these four subjects,—

*“What is seen with one's own eyes is called Akhyana by the learned men; what is heard from different persons is called Upakhyana; songs about the ancestors are called Gatha; and the treatment of the Sradh ceremony is called Kalpasuddhi.”*

We shall presently show that the original Purana, written by Vyasa, and the subsequent six Puranas, written by his disciples, dwelt on the four subjects named above. The accounts of eye witnesses (*Akhyana*), and contemporary histories (*Upakhyana*) were their two main features.

The following extracts would show that in ancient India there was a class of men, called *Sutas*, whose profession was to recite the Puranas and the Histories. They had also another calling, namely that of the charioteer—



ship of kings and princes. The Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda, 15th Sarga, 19th Sloka, says :—

*"Having said this, Sumantra (the charioteer of king Dasaratha), learned in the Puranas, came to the door, and by that ever-closed door entered the room."*

The commentator of the Ramayana explains Sutas as "men learned in the Puranas."

The Mahavarata, Adi Parva, 40th Chapter, 6th Sloka, says :—

*"I have heard all that you have narrated. Now I wish to hear how Astika was born. Hearing his (these) words, the Suta began to narrate the story."*

The Vagavata, 1st Skanda, 4th Chapter, 2nd Sloka, says :—

*"O Suta, you are highly blessed ; you are the foremost of all great speakers. Relate to us the holy story of the Vagavata which was narrated by the blessed Suka."*

The Kurma Purana, 12th Chapter, Slokas 28-29, says :—

*"Those Sutas, that were born in my family, had not the right to study the Vedas. At the command of the Lord, they carried on the profession of reciting the Puranas."*



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The Vishnu Purana, Part I., Chapter 13th, Slokas 50-53, says :—

*“At the auspicious Sacrifice which was performed (at the birth of Prithu) and which was presided over by the Grandsire, the highly intelligent Suta was produced from the Soma plant. And in that great Sacrifice, the highly intelligent Magadha was also born. Thereupon the Rishis thus addressed Magadha and Suta :—‘Sing the glory of the mighty king Prithu, the son of Vena. This is your special function, and he too is the fit object of your praise.’”*

The Brahma Purana says :—

*“All the Rishis said, ‘Sing the glory of these kings.’ Being appointed by them in this good work, I (Suta) sang his (Prithu’s) glory.”*

From the preceding facts we are now justified in arriving at the following conclusions, namely :—

1. Even from the Vedic age there was a class of men amongst the Aryans who were called the *Sūtas*.





2. Their profession was to recite the glories of kings, to narrate the histories of royal families, and to relate the life and career of great men, invariably gathered from eye-witnesses and contemporary chroniclers.

3. These narratives were known by the names of the *Puranas*, and the *Itihasas* (histories). Originally there were only six such *Puranas*, written by the six disciples of Vyasa who wrote the Original *Purana Sanhita*.

4. The present *Puranas* are a mass of collected records on various subjects. In them have been incorporated the old *Puranas* and *Itihasas*. The histories of the royal families and great men of ancient India, therefore, now lie buried in this mass of fictions. But they still exist, and they might be restored.

THE story of Krishna is told in the *Puranas*, but not in all of them. We find  
The Story of Krishna it in the Vishnu *Purana*, Brahma *Purana*, Vagavata *Purana*, Brahma-Vaivarta *Purana*, Skanda *Purana*, Bamana *Purana*, and Kurma *Purana*. Except Vishnu *Purana*, Brahma *Purana*, Vagavata *Purana*, and Brahma-Vaivarta *Purana*, the story of Krishna is very briefly told in the other *Puranas*, and their accounts in no way differ from those given in the first four *Puranas*.



named above. Therefore we leave them out of our consideration.

We have already said that the original Brahma-Vaivarta Purana is lost. The accounts of Krishna that the present Brahma-Vaivarta gives differ so very much from those given by the other Puranas that we can easily reject them as being a modern creation of some enthusiastic religious scholar, who saw Krishna in his own imagination as one who was the embodiment of divine love in sensuality.

\* The Vagavata is a work written many hundred years after the Vishnu Purana. Some say that it was written by Bopadeva, who flourished in the 13th century A.D. It is apparent that there was a great quarrel over this Purana between the Vaisnava (the worshippers of Vishnu) and the Saktas (the worshippers of Sakti). As the Vaisnavas have the Vagavata Purana of their own, so have the Saktas theirs. Each sect deems its own Purana as being one of the chief eighteen mentioned above. The great commentator of the Vagavata Purana, Sridhara Swami, was fully cognisant of the serious doubts that the people entertained about the Purana he commentated upon. Therefore he, at the very outset, said :—



*"None should doubt that there is any other Purāṇa called the Vagavata."*

When this quarrel over the Vagavata was going on, many works were written. One of them was called :—

*A slap on the face of the wicked.*

Another was called :—

*A great slap on the face of the wicked :—*

The reply to these works was called :—

*A beating of the shoe on the face of the wicked.\**

All this clearly indicates that the Vagavata is a subsequent Purāṇa. The story of Krishna as given in it is, therefore, based upon some other older Purāṇas.

The account of Krishna that Brahma Purāṇa and Vishnu Purāṇa give is word for word the same. It is not possible,—and neither such plagiarism is met with in the Sanskrit literature,—that either of the two has bodily copied twenty-six long chapters from the other. It is quite apparent, therefore, that both the Vishnu Purāṇa and Brahma Purāṇa have quoted these twenty-six chapters narrating the Career of Krishna from some other older work.

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\* See Wilson's Translation of Vishnu Purāṇa, Preface.





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But before we discuss the Vishnu Purana, we must take into our consideration another work which, though not included amongst the Puranas, is in no way different from any of them. This work is called *Harivansa*. It is a later work than the Vishnu Purana, and the story of Krishna that it gives is apparently borrowed from it. The reason for our saying this will be apparent from our notes later on. Evolution is a law of Nature. Even in literature we find that things gradually expand in subsequent descriptions. If our readers take the trouble to go through the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa carefully, they will find that the descriptions of things in the Vishnu Purana are all expanded in the Harivansa. In the Vishnu Purana, Putana is only a child-killer, but in Harivansa she is a demoness. It claims to be an Appendix to the Mahavarata, but we agree with H. H. Wilson in saying, "Its internal evidence is strongly indicative of a date considerably subsequent to that of the major portion of the Mahavarata."\*

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\* H. H. Wilson's Essays, Analytical, Critical, and Philosophical, on subjects connected with the Sanskrit Literature, Vol. I.



The Vishnu Purana narrates only the early life, and a scattered account of the later life, of Krishna. It contains that which is not narrated in the Mahavarata. We cannot say,—and we have not the least chance of finding it out,—when this story of the Vishnu Purana was originally written. We have already said that all the Puranas have gone through a process of additions and alterations in the course of many hundreds of years, and the Vishnu Purana is no exception. We find in it matters of so recent a date as that of the 10th century, A. D. But we cannot, therefore, say that this work does not date any period earlier than the 10th century,\* and that the whole of this Purana was written in or about this century. The internal evidence strongly indicates a much earlier date.

But we have to do only with the story of Krishna, and we shall be able to show that the story as told by the Vishnu Purana, and also by the Mahavarata, was extant in India in the

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\* See Asiatic Researches, Vol. XVII., Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. III., pp. 262 and 339, Vol. VI. pp. 1-17, 434-458 and 970-980; Vol. VII., pp. 37 and 634; Ariana Antiqua by H. H. Wilson, pp. 419, 422, 425, 427, also wilson's Vishnu Purana.





10th century B. C., instead of the 10th century  
A. D.

The Mahavarata is most erroneously considered to be an *Epic* poem.\* It does not possess even one characteristic of an *Epic* poem. It is not a poem at all. Almost all Sanskrit works, such as those on Grammar, Philosophy, Pathology, Astronomy, Mathematics, are written in verse. Surely none of them is a poem. The Mahavarata was originally a history—an *Akhyana*—a contemporary chronicle. The Present Mahavarata itself says in the *Adi-Parva*, Chapter 1st, Sloka 20 :—

*"We desire to hear Bharata, the sacred history that drives away all fear."*

And again in Sloka 26 :—

*"Some bards have already sung this history."*

And again in Sloka 55 :—

*"The son of Satyawati (Vyasa), by penances and meditation having classified the ever-lasting Veda, composed this only history."*

It is even now called an *Itihasa* (history) by all of our Sanskrit scholars.

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\* By many Oriental scholars.





This is the definition of "history" given by the Sanskrit Lexicographers.

*"The accounts of the Past that contain instructions on Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha are called the histories."*

In its present form the Mahavarata is neither an Epic poem nor a history. It is almost like any of the other Puranas,—a mass of collected records on various subjects written in the course of many hundreds of years. A cursory view of it would show that it holds in its capacious bulk many independent works, such as the Bhagavata Gita, Anu Gita, Sanatsu Gita, Markandeya Samashya, and so forth. The present Mahavarata itself says in the Adi Parva.—

*"Vyasa originally compiled the Bharata, exclusive of Episodes, in twenty-four thousand Slokas. This much only is called by the learned as the real Bharata. He subsequently composed an Epitome in one hundred and fifty verses."*

But the present Mahavarata contains instead of twenty-four thousand *Slokas*, no less than 107, 390 *Slokas*. It contains a Table of Contents, instead of 150 *Slokas*, of no less than 268 *Slokas*. This is a clear indication that many thousand *Slokas* have been added to



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the original Mahavarata in the course of many thousand years.

The Present Mahavarata is told by a certain nameless man. This is a translation of its first two Slokas :—

*"One day when the great sages of hard austerities, who had been present at the twelve years' Sacrifice of Kulapati Saunaka, were comfortably seated in the Naimisha forest, Rishi Lomaharsana's son, Ugrasrava, popularly known as the son of a Suta, well-versed in the Puranas, came to them in all humility."*

The nameless gentleman who recites these two Slokas goes on to say that Ugrasrava Souti at the request of the Rishis then began to recite the Mahavarata, which was originally composed by Vyasa and narrated by Vaisampayana at the Snake-Sacrifice of Janamejaya.

Thus we find when it was recited in the Naimisha forest before the Rishis, even then it has come down to the fourth generation ;—  
(1) Vyasa, who taught it to (2) Vaisampayana, who taught it to (3) Lomaharsana, who taught it to his son (4) Ugrasrava. But even this Mahavarata we do not possess. The present one is told by some



nameless person who recites what Ugrasrava narrated. When it was recited by Ugrasrava in the Naimisha forest, it had even then gone through some additions and alterations, and a difference of opinion had already arisen about the various readings of its Text. *Adi Parva*, Chapter I., Sloka 53 says :—

*“Some read the Bharata from the first Mantra, some from the story of Astika, some again from Uparichara, while some Brahmans read the whole.”*

Ugrasrava himself says in the *Adi Parva*, Chapter I., Sloka 8, that he knows only eight thousand and eight hundred *Slokas*, but the *Mahavarata* that we now possess contains more than a *lakh* of *Slokas*.

It is thus quite apparent that the works, such as the *Mahavarata* and the *Puranas*, were made the vehicles by various enthusiastic writers of different cults at different times to promulgate their own dogmas and doctrines. They became thus the store-houses of writings of all sorts of men of all shades of opinions,—nay of any and everyone who thought that he had written something clever. From big books to single couplets, everything was thrust into them by every sort and grade of men





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who desired to publish their compositions and to secure for them a wide circle of readers.

THE story of Krishna is narrated in the Mahavarata not as it is in the Krishna in the Vishnu Purana. He is seen in the Mahavarata only when he comes in contact with the Kurus and the Pandavas. It is quite natural that such should be the case. The Mahavarata is the history of the Kuru-Pandavas. It was originally recited at the command of Janamejaya who was the great grandson of the Pandavas. It was purposely composed to recite the glory of the Kuru-Pandavas, to relate the history of the Pandava heroes, and to narrate the great battle that was fought by them on the field of Kurukshetra. In such a work the life and career of Krishna are not to be expected to be written in full. He is seen in this work only in those places where he comes in contact with the men whose history the work is.

When, however, in the course of years he came to be known as one of the great men that the world has ever produced, then attempts were made to fill up the gap in the account of his life and career which was met with in the



**Mahavarata.** In the Harivansa, Chapter I, we find it is mentioned that Janamejaya, after hearing the Mahavarata desired to hear the story of Krishna's early life. It is said that Vaisampayana then began to recite the Harivansa. The Vagavata distinctly says that Harivansa was written to fill up the gap in the story of Krishna which was found in the Mahavarata. Though there is no such mention made in the Vishnu Purana, yet seeing the way in which it has narrated his life and career, we can easily find that its account is also an attempt to fill up the gap left vacant by the Mahavarata. It has not narrated anything that is already in the Mahavarata; it has narrated only his early career—that which is not to be found in the great work.

We thus meet with the story of Krishna's life chiefly in the two most ancient Sanskrit works, namely the Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana. The one narrates his early life and the other his later life. But both of them in their present forms are compilations of old stories, annals, and histories. They were compiled many hundreds of years after the birth of Krishna. They have, therefore, in their present shape little or no historical value. But we shall presently show that the story of Krishna was extant in India many hundred years before the





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present Mahavarata came into existence. If we can show this, it would then be clear that the original story of Krishna's life, which we shall prove to have been written by a contemporary chronicler, namely Rishi Vyasa, was taken bodily into the present Mahavarata, and then added and interpolated, till at last it almost disappeared in a sea of annals, legends, and fictions.

LET us now see how long the story of Krishna's life and the story of the Mahavarata have been extant in India.

Antiquity of the story of Krishna

In many of the inscriptions that have been discovered and deciphered, the story of Krishna is distinctly mentioned. In a Siva's temple in a place called Iballi in Dharwar, the great battle of Kurukshetra has been distinctly mentioned.\* This inscription says it was made 3730 years after the great battle, but it is also written that it was made in the 506th *Sakabda* which corresponds with 584 A. D.†

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\* See Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. IV., pp. 376 and 377., Vol. V., p. 725, VI., p. 88., Journal, Royal A.S. New Series, 1856, Vol. I, part 2, p. 273.

† See the Journal of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. IX., p. 315.





In the copper plates of the Gurjar kings, dated the 4th century A. D., the following line occurs.

*"Produced with Lakshmi and placed on the breast of Krishna, it was like the Kaustava gem."*

In another plate, dated the 2nd century A. D. the name of Krishna is thus mentioned.\*

*"O Krishna the Abode of Rest."*

In a mountain cave near Nassik, there is an inscription, dated the 1st century A. D. The following line occurs in it.†

*"As mighty as Rama, Krishna, Arjuna and Bhimasena."*

In the ninth century A. D., the celebrated work, *Sankara Bijaya*, was written.‡ In

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\* See Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1854, pp. 57-58.

† See Journal, Bombay Branch of the R. A. S. Vol. V, p. 41.

‡ Many Oriental Scholars of both this country and Europe have fixed the age of almost all the Sanskrit works. But there are differences of opinion amongst them. We have accepted the opinions of only those with whom we have been able to agree. For fear of making this *Introduction*



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one place it distinctly mentions the names of both Rama and Krishna and calls them Incarnations of Gods.

Between the 6th and 7th century A. D., *Vasavadatta* was written.\* In one place it says :—

*“Harivansa in which the charming account of Puskara is given.”*

This distinctly refers to the “Harivansa,” —the work which we have already mentioned. In many places of this celebrated work, the names of Krishna, Arjuna, Bhima, and others are mentioned.

The great poet Kalidas flourished between the 4th and 6th century A. D. † He writes in his celebrated poem *Meghaduta* :—

*“The rainbow appears from the top of the yonder ant-hill like a collected mass of bri-*

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tedious, we have not dwelt on them. We have given the dates which appeared to us reliable and approximately correct, but we have mentioned in the foot notes the works that support our views.

\* See F. E. Hall's Preface to *Vasavadatta*, 1859, pp. 11-17 and 51-52; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1862, and *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1851, pp. 203-210.

† Weber's *History of the Indian Literature*, 1878, p. 195.



*liancy of gems. As Vishnu in his Gopa (cow herd) form is adorned with the brilliant peacock's plumes, so will your black body be exceedingly beautified by that rainbow."*

Between the 2nd and the 3rd century A. D., *Mrichhakatika* was written.\* In it we meet with the names of Dhritarashtra, Yudhishthira, and the pandavas.

In the 2nd century B. C.† Patanjali wrote the *Vasya* of the great grammar of Panini. We find in his work the story of Krishna's life prominently mentioned Patanjali's Note on Panini 3-1-26, says :—

*"In describing the slaughter of Kansa—Kansa ghadhayati—is proper."*

Note on Panini 3-2-11.

*"Vasudeva surely killed Kansa."*

Note on Panini 2-3-36.

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\* See Wilson's *Theatre of the Hindus*, Vol. I., and also his *Ariana Antiqua*, p. 364.

† See Goldstucker's Preface to *Manava Kalpa Sutra*, pp. 229-235, Dr. Bhandarkar in the *Indian Antiquary* for Oct. 1872, pp. 299-302., Ibid, August, 1877, pp. 241-251., Ibid, Dec. 1876, pp. 350—354., Ibid, Oct., 1877, pp. 301-307. See also Kielhorn's *Essays on Katyana and Patanjali*.





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*"Krishna was ill-disposed towards his maternal uncle (Kansa)."*

Note on Panini 2-2-23.

*"Let the strength of Krishna increase with Sankersana, Balarama, his brother."*

Note on Panini 3-2-118.

*"The Kurus fought a righteous battle."*

Katyana, the celebrated author of *Kalpa Sutra*, flourished in the 4th century B. C.\* He wrote a *Bartika* (explanatory notes) on Panini. In this work a distinct trace of the story of the Mahavarata is found.

Now Ashwalayana, the author of *Grihyasutra*, was born some centuries before Katyana. He too has mentioned the Mahavarata in his work. *Grihyasutra*, 3-4, says :—

*"Let Sumanta, Jaimini, Vaisampayana, Paila, Sutravashya Varata-Dharmacharjas, and all other Acharjas be gratified."*

In the fourth century B. C., Megasthenes was in India. He has left behind him a record of what he saw in this country. He speaks of

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\* See Kielhora's Essay on Katyana and Patanjali.



a Hindu god, the description of whom does not fit any other Hindu god except Krishna.\*

In the fifth century B. C., Buddhism spread all over India, and the life of Buddha, the celebrated Buddhist work, *Lalita Vistara*, was written.† In the 11th Chapter of this very ancient work, the name of Krishna is distinctly mentioned.

The Upanishadas are still earlier works. They were written long before Buddha was born. But in one of the oldest Upanishada, the name of Krishna is distinctly mentioned.

Chhandogya-Upanishada, 3rd Propataka, 17th part, says :—

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“Saying all this (Rishi) Ghora of the race of Angirasha then spoke thus to Devaki's son, Krishna :—‘Take to these three things at the end, namely,—you are undeteriorating, everlasting, and immortal.’”

The Aranyakas are still earlier works ; and again the Brahmanas are still earlier. Max Muller says that the Brahmanas were

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\* See Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arian by J. W. Macrindle, 1877. pp. 39, 178, 201, 203.

† See Rhys David's Buddhism.



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begun to be written from 1,000 B. C. Martin Haug says that they were begun to be written from the 14th century B. C. In one of the Aranyakas Krishna's name is distinctly mentioned. In two of the Brahmanas, the names of Parikshit and Janamejaya are mentioned. \* They were the grandson and great-grandson of the Pandavas.

The earlier work than any of these is perhaps Panini's great Grammar. Professor Goldstucker has proved Panini's age beyond all doubts.† We can safely say that Panini flourished before the 12th and 13th century B. C. Even then the story of Krishna's life was extant, and he was held in high respect. The complete original story of the Mahavarata was well known in Panini's time.‡

Finding in Panini that Krishna was already an adorable being and the story of the Mahavarata was already an old story when that great Grammarian flourished, we can reasonably suppose that the story then extant was written at least a hundred, or hundred and

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\* Aitariya Brahmana, Panjika 8-21., Satapatha Brahmana, 13-5-4-1, Taitariya Aranyaka, 10-6-6

† See Goldstucker's Panini.

‡ See Panini 8-3-95. Panini 4-1-176. Panini 4-3-98.





fifty years before he was born, i.e. it was written in the 15th or the 16th century B. C.

We shall presently show that battle of Kurukshetra was fought in the 15th or the 16th century B. C. Under the circumstances it is quite evident that the story of the Mahavarata was written immediately after that great battle. Would it be now very wrong to infer that it was really written by Vyasa who was a contemporary of the Pandavas?

We have nothing to disbelieve the fact that the story of the Mahavarata was recited before King Janamejaya who was the great-grandson of the Pandavas. We can quote innumerable instances from the Sanskrit literature to prove that the accounts of the royal families and great men of ancient India were written at the command of their descendants, and they were as a matter of custom recited by the *Sutas* at the Sacrifices in which the kings and the princes whiled away their time by listening to them. It is therefore quite natural that Janamejaya should like to hear the history of his forefathers from Vaisampayana, who himself says that he learnt the account from his preceptor, Vyasa.



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If this be the case, the theory that the story is an allegory, or that the Pandavas and Krishna are but after-additions, falls to the ground.\* We have seen Panini mentions the name of both Arjuna and Krishna. We can find nothing in the history of the period between the battle of Kurukshetra and the birth of Panini to lead us to believe that Arjuna and Krishna had been subsequently added to the story of the Mahavarata. It was impossible to make such radical changes in such a popular work as the Mahavarata. The whole story of the Mahavarata stands on Arjuna and Krishna. Janamejaya who caused the story to be recited was the great-grandson of Arjuna and great-grand-nephew of Krishna, for Krishna was the brother of his great-grandmother. The descendants of Krishna and Arjuna ruled in India for many hundred years. If Janamejaya and Parikshit be historical personages, Arjuna and Krishna can by no means be myths, for there is no proof that they were not descended from Arjuna and Subhadra, and that Subhadra was not Krishna's sister. All other characters in the original story of the Maha-

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\* Lassen calls it an allegory and attempts to explain it. Weber on the other hand says that the Pandavas and Krishna are after-additions.





varata may be expunged, but Krishna and Arjuna can by no means be displaced, for if they are removed, the whole story falls to the ground.

THE opinion of the Oriental scholars is that the battle of Kurukshetra was fought sometime between the 12th and the 14th century, B. C.,\* but we hope to show that this great battle was fought sometime between the 15th and the 16th century B. C.

Perhaps we shall not have to tell our readers that *Rajatarangini*, the history of Kashmir, is one of the surviving histories that were written in the Sanskrit language. The author of this celebrated work, Kalhana, says that one Gonarda was occupying the throne of Kashmir when Judhithira was reigning in Kurujangala. He adds that Gonarda ascended the throne in the 653rd year of the Kali (*Yuga*) age and Gonarda reigned for 35 years.

According to *Rajatarangini*, we get about 2400 B. C., as the age of Judhithira.

Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24, Sloka 34, says :—

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\* See some of their opinions in P. I.





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*"The age of Parikshit is after 1200 years of Kali age."*

According to this we get, 1900 years B. C., as the age in which the battle was fought.

In Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24, Sloka 39, and Vagavata, Skanda 12, Chap. 2, Sloka 32, we find *Magha* is the 10th constellation from *Purva Ashara* and *Magha* was the constellation at the time of *Judhisthira*; thus *Judhisthira* would be one thousand years ahead of *Nanda*.

Vishnu Purana, Part 4, Chap. 24, Sloka 32, says that *Nanda* was 100 years ahead of *Chandra Gupta*, the great Emperor, who was the contemporary of *Alexander*.

Vishnu Purana, Chap. 24th says :—

*"Maha Padma and his descendants will be the lords of earth for one hundred years. The Brahmana named Kautillya will destroy the kings of the Nanda dynasty. In their place the Maurjas will rule over the earth. Kautillya will instal Chandra Gupta on the throne."*

*Alexander* invaded India in 325 B. C. *Chandra Gupta* ascended the throne in 315 B. C. According to this, we get *Parikshit* 1015



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years ahead of Nanda, and Nanda 100 years ahead of Chandra Gupta, the total being 1115 years. Add to this 315 years; thus we get 1430 B. C. the age of Parikshit. The battle was thus fought sometime in the 15th century B. C.

There is another astronomical calculation by which we can fix upon the age of the great battle.

The Vagavata, 12th Skanda, Chapter II. Vayu Purana, 37th Chapter, 412-417, Slokas, and Vishnu Purana, Part IV., Sec. 24, Slokas 33-34, give us an astronomical calculation of the age of Judhisthira, and they are almost all similar. We quote the Vishnu Purana.

*"The two Stars amongst the Seven-Rishis (stars), which are seen in the eastern sky, have a star in a direct line to them. The Seven Rishis stay in it for one hundred years. O best of the twice-born, the Seven-Rishis were in Magha at the time when Parikshit was born."*

Though the meaning of these two Slokas are very vague, yet some of the Oriental scholars have fixed from them the age of Judhisthira as being sometime between the 15th and 16th century B. C.



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We can take the help of another astronomical calculation to fix the age of the battle of Kurukshetra. When Bhishma fell wounded, he said that he would not die in the Southern Solstice which, according to the notion of that age, was inauspicious to depart from this life. So he patiently waited for the Northern Solstice which took place in the month of *Magha*. He said when dying :—

*"O gentle Yudhisthira, the month of Magha has arrived."*

It clearly says that when Bhishma died, the Northern Solstice took place in the month of *Magha*. But the Northern Solstice does not now take place in *Magha* ; it takes place on the 7th or the 8th *Pousha* (21st. December). We shall not trouble our readers with astronomical calculations, but the result at which we arrive is that the period which intervenes between the present day of the Northern Solstice with that which took place when Bhishma died is about 3246 years. We thus find Bhishma died sometime in the 16th century B. C.

It would be presumptuous on our part to say that we have, after a lapse of about four thousand years, been able to fix the age of Krishna beyond all doubts. But we have





placed before our readers some facts from which we can reasonably ask them to accept the theory that he flourished sometime between the 15th and the 16th century B. C.

We believe we can now very reasonably come to the following conclusions :—

1. That Krishna was born sometime in the 15th and 16th century B. C.

2. That this story of his life was written by one who was his contemporary and who knew him best.

3. That this story now lies buried in two ancient Sanskrit works, namely the Mahavarata and the Vishnu Purana.

Now the question arises,—Is it possible to unearth this original story of Krishna's life from underneath the great mass of fictions that cover it? We are happy to say it is not as difficult a task as it appears at the first sight, and that for the following three reasons, namely,—

1. We have been able to fix the age in which Krishna was born.

2. We have a very clear and faithful account of the political, social and religious



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condition of India of this particular age in such Sanskrit works as the Veda, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Sutras &c.

3. We have come to learn by the careful study of the Sanskrit literature what religious, social and political changes passed over the Hindu race since the day when Krishna was born.

To restore the original story of Krishna's life from the present Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana, we shall have, therefore, simply to leave out of them the following.—

1. All matters, whether in respect of religion, manners and customs, social and political affairs, or any other matters, that were not in existence in the Vedic age.

We know what was and what was not in existence in that period of the history of the Aryan race. For example we know that in the Vedic age, the Aryans had no such gods as Vishnu, Siva &c. ; they had no caste system as we have now, they had no Brahmanical supremacy, and so forth. Therefore, in finding out the original story of Krishna from within the two works in question, we must go on expunging all matters that have any connection with these gods and with such matters as mentioned above.



2. We know that many religious, social, and political changes passed over the Aryan race long after the death of Krishna. By careful study of the Sanskrit literature we have been able to know what they and their nature and results were.

In trying to revive the original story of Krishna's life from the Mahavarata and the Vishnu Purana, we must throw away all matters that savour of these changes. For instance, Buddhism flourished in India many hundred years after the birth of Krishna. Therefore, if we find anything in these two works that is apparently the result of Buddhism, we must reject it.

We need not say we shall also reject all foolish fanciful, and poetical descriptions,—all matters based on unnatural and extraordinary miracles,—things with which these works are replete. They are evidently added to these works in order to make them more amusing and interesting to the masses before whom they were used to be recited and sung. Thus using the pruning knife, we shall try to find out the story of Krishna's life which was written by his great contemporary the Sage Vyasa.

We shall base our accounts on the Vishnu Purana and the Mahavarata, though we shall





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sometime refer to Harivansa and Vagavata and other Puranas. But as we shall proceed, we shall append critical and elaborate notes to unfold the original story.

WE believe we should now  
General Summary. summarise the points put forward by us.

1. Even from the Vedic age there was a class of men amongst the Aryans who were called the *Sutas*.

2. Their profession was to recite the glories of kings, to narrate the histories of royal families, and to relate the life and career of great men, invariably gathered from eye-witnesses and contemporary chroniclers.

3. These narratives were known by the names of the *Puranas* and the *Itihasas*.

4. The present *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, however are masses of collected records on various subjects in which have been incorporated the old *Puranas* and *Itihasas*. The histories of royal families and great men of ancient India, therefore, now lie buried in this mass of fictions. But they still exist, and they might be restored.

5. The account of the life and career of Krishna, according to the custom of ancient



India, was written by a contemporary chronicler, namely, the great sage Vyasa.

6. It was originally recited by a *Suta* named Lomaharsana, and then by his son, Ugrasrava, and then by other *Sutas*, and thus it came down from generation to generation.

7. This account of Krishna was incorporated in the original *Puranas* and *Itihasas* which in their turn were incorporated in the mass of literature which now goes by the name of the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*.

8. The most ancient of the present *Puranas* and *Itihasas* are the Mahavarata and Vishnu Purana.

9. These two works contain the original story of Krishna as written by Vyasa.

10. This story was written by a contemporary chronicler, and therefore it has the greatest historical value.

With great pains, with laborious study, and with careful analysis of Conclusion innumerable works, we have made an humble attempt to raise up the buried statue and to rescue the lost history of the Greatest and the Grandest of Men that was ever born in this world,—a Man who was great and perfect in every



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way,—a man who was too high to be understood, and therefore universally misunderstood,—a Man who was the most perfect and the highest ideal of the human race,—a Man in whom appeared the Most High out of His infinite kindness for the guidance of his beloved Creation.

We do not exaggerate. We earnestly ask our readers to go through these pages without prejudices and without preconceived misconceptions. We earnestly solicit them to peruse this "Life and Teachings of Srikrishna" with an impartial mind and a devout heart.





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*Behold, Partha, my forms by hundreds and thousands. They are various, divine, and different in colour and form.*

*Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Aswins, and the Marutas. Behold, O Bharata, innumerable wonders never seen by you before.*

*Behold, Gudakesa, the entire universe of movables and immovables, and whatever else you desire to see, all collected in me.*

*But you are not fit to see me with these your eyes. Therefore I give you divine sight. Behold now my great Mystic Form.*

*Gita, Chap. XI., Slokas 5-8.*





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*Grant*  
*Gracious Srikrishna*  
*Thy*  
*Grace.*



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# SRIKRISHNA

## PART I CHAPTER I

### THE KINGDOM OF MATHURA

AT the time of which we are speaking,\* the kingdom of Mathura† extended on both the sides of the *Jamuna*. It was neither a very big State, nor a very powerful one, but it was peopled by some of the heroic and proud clans†

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\* Colebrooke says that the battle of Kurukshetra, i. e. the time when Srikrishna was alive,—was fought in the 14th century B. C. Wilson and Elphinstone are at one with him. Wilford says it was fought in 1370 B. C. Pratt has fixed its date as the 12th century B. C. We have, however, fixed it some time between the 15th and 16th century B. C. See *Introduction*.

† Mathura is now a large district in the North-Western Provinces.

‡ They were called Yadus, Bhojas, Andhakas, Kukuras, Satwatas, Dasarnas, Vrisnis &c. &c.



of the Aryan race\* that had already occupied all the fertile plains of Northern India. The country was called Surasenaka after the name of the founder of the kingdom, who was named Surasena. He was a descendant of Yadu, a scion of the great Lunar dynasty.†

\* For an account of the Aryan race we would refer our readers to such works as the following :—

- (a) Lectures on the Science of Language by Professor Max Müller. 1st and 2nd series.
- (b) Wieber's Modern Investigation into Ancient India.
- (c) Popp's Comparative Grammar.
- (d) Prichard's Physical History of Mankind.
- (e) Burronof's Commentaire sur le Yacna, pp. 460-62, &c.

† Two of the most ancient and celebrated royal dynasties of India were called after the names of the Sun and the Moon. In almost all Sanskrit works the mention of these two dynasties is met with. The Mahavarata, Vagavata, Vishnu Purana and other such works say that the kings of Mathura belonged to the Lunar dynasty. The following is the Genealogy they quote :—

Chandra (moon) begot Budha, Budha begot Ila, Ila begot Pururava, Pururava begot Ayu, Ayu begot Nabusa, Nabusa begot Yayati, Yayati begot five sons, namely Yadu, Puru, Tarvasu Drujhu and Anu. The kings and princes of Mathura (e. g. Krishna and others) were the descendants of Yadu and those of Hastinapur (e. g. the Kurus and the Pandavas) were the descendants of Puru.

In the Rig Veda, Manadala 10th, we find Pururava as a historical personage,—a powerful king. But in Yajur Veda





## THE KINGDOM OF MATHURA

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The city of Mathura itself was situated within a fort ; it stood on the right bank of the deep blue *Jamuna*, which rolled by the foot of the Vrishni citadel. Outside the fort, as far as

*Sambhita*, *Madhyaudini Branch*, Sec. V., *Kandika 2*, we find *Pururava* and *Urvashi* are but two pieces of wood, by striking which the sacrificial fire was made. In the *Rig Veda*, *Mandala 10th*, *Suktas 48-49*, we meet with the names of *Yadu*, *Puru* and *Tarvasu*, but there is no mention of their relationship to one another.

In *Harivansa Parva* of the *Harivansa* on account of the *Yadu* dynasty of Mathura is given, which exactly tallies with what we find in the other *Puranas*. But in *Vishnu Parva* of the same work a different account is given. There it is said that *Yadu* of Mathura was born of the *Solar* dynasty. It says that one *Harjashya* of the *Solar* dynasty was once the king of *Ayodhya*. He married the daughter of *Madhu*, the king of *Madhuvana*. Now this *Madhuvana* is said to be the modern *Mathura*. It then goes on to say that *Harjashya*, for some reasons or other, came to *Mathura* and lived in his father-in-law's house. He begot a son called *Yadu*, from whom the *Yadavas* of *Mathura* were descended.

In the *Ramayana* we find that *Madhu's* son, *Lavana* of *Madhuvana*, was defeated by *Satrughana*, the youngest brother of *Rama* of *Ayodhya*. It then goes on to say that it was *Satrughana* who founded the city of *Mathura*. Many years after, the great-grandson of *Yadu* named *Bhima* drove away the *Ayodhya* people from *Mathura*, and thenceforth it



yes could see, lay extended green fields and grassy pastures, with small hamlets and villages shaded by beautiful orchards and gardens. Broad well-constructed roads ran in all directions ; over them moved along the chariots of warriors, the beasts of burden and the swift horses, the slow camels and the huge elephants of traders and merchants. It was a very busy city,—trade, agriculture, and business being in full swing.\*

Some five miles west of the city lay an extensive wood known by the name of *Vrindavana*. A beautiful hill called *Govardhana* rose towering over its grassy plains. It abounded in various charming groves of *Bakulas* (*Mimusops Elengi*), *Kadambas* (*Nandea Kadamba*) and *Tamalās* (*Xanthocymus Pictorius*). Entwined with blossoming creepers and overhung with beautiful orchids, they resounded with the sweet notes of *Kokilas* (*Cuculus Indicus*), *Chakravakas* (*Anos Casarca*) and *Sarasas* (*Ardea Sibirica*). Deer, antelopes, buffaloes and various animals of various colours

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always remained in the hands of the descendants of Yadu, viz. the Yadavas.

Thus we find both the descendants of the Solar and the Lunar dynasties claimed Krishna as their own.

\* See *Vagavata*, Skanda X.; Chapter 41st, Slokas 19-23.



roamed in these shady arbours. The *ch. Vrindavana* was the most beautiful wood that lay on the banks of the *Jamuna* from mouth to the source.

But all the forests near and around Mathura were not as beautiful as the *Vrindavana*. The northern and southern outskirts of the kingdom of Surasenaka were covered with dense forests, abounding in fearful wild beasts and more fearful wild-men.\* The original inhabitants of this part of the country, being driven away by the Aryan invaders, the ancestors of the *Vrisnis*, had taken shelter in these wild forests. These Nagas, as they were called, if not as much civilised as the Aryans, were not exactly wild-men. They had their own kings, their own armies and their own religions and societies. Forced to lead a wild life, driven as they were by their Aryan enemies, they lived far away in the innermost depth of the forest in their own wild settlements. Near and about Mathura the Nagas abounded, and though they kept burning in their heart the bitterest enmity towards their Aryan conquerors, yet

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\* See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII. Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th; Vagavata. Skanda X., Chapter XVI.





and not give vent to their feeling. They  
took tribute and had commercial inter-  
course with them in the greatest amity. But  
if opportunity occurred, they did not let it slip  
without wreaking the severest vengeance on  
their great enemy.\*

Besides the Vrisni Aryans and the wild  
Nagas, there lived, near Mathura, a powerful  
nomad clan, the people belonging to which were  
known by the name of the *Gopas*.† Some five

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\* In all the Puranas, the Nagas are described as "snakes."  
As the word *Naga* means a snake, we are afraid the authors of  
the Puranas thought it proper to describe them as such.  
But if we read their descriptions of these so called "snakes,"  
we can come to no other conclusion than that these Nagas  
were but a race of wild-men, the original inhabitants of  
some parts of India, whence they were driven away by the  
Aryans. Such being the case, we have rejected all descrip-  
tions in which these people were spoken of as "snakes."  
See Muir's Sanskrit Texts, Vol. II., Chapter III.

† In some Puranas these Gopas are described as the  
Aryans of the Vaisya order. Nanda is said to be the son of  
Vasudeva's uncle by a Vaisya woman. But our readers will  
find that at the time of which we speak there was, in fact, no  
caste system amongst the Aryans. If Nanda and his clan  
were Vrishni Aryans, they would have been the Aryans of  
Mathura; but the fact is otherwise. Vidura was the son of  
a maid servant,—but he was still one of the Kurus. For all  
these reasons we believe that these Gopas were a sort of



or six miles from Mathura on the other side of the *Jamuna*, there lay an extensive pasture-ground, overspread with fresh, green and soft grass, abounding in shady trees and watery streamlets, and possessing every requisite for the tending of sheep and cattle. Here did these people,—the *Gopas*,—live with their waggons and cars, with their tents and canvas-sheds, with their wives and children, and sheep and cattle. Though they were powerful and numerous, yet they were not quarrelsome and dangerous; they loved peace, and they peacefully paid tribute to the ruling chiefs of Mathura. At the time of which we speak, Nanda was the chief of this great nomad clan.

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gypsy race which adopted the Aryan religion, but led a nomad life.



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## CHAPTER II

## THE KINGS OF MATHURA

WHEN the founder of the kingdom of Mathura, Surasena, died, he was succeeded by many of his descendants till at last one Ugrasena ascended the throne. He was the son of Ahuka, who had another son named Devaka. Both brothers had many children,\* but it would suffice if we mention only two of them, namely the eldest son of Ugrasena, who was named Kansa† and the youngest daughter of Devaka, who was named Devaki. She was the mother of Krishna, and Kansa was the great tyrant of Mathura, who made strenuous efforts to kill him till at last he himself was killed by him.

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\* Devaka had four sons and seven daughters. Ugrasena had nine sons and five daughters.

See Vagavata, Skanda X, Chapter XXIV., Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV.

† Kansa was an illegitimate child. It is said that once upon a time when Ugrasena's wife went into the forest to sport, she was embraced by the king of Saiva. The fruit of this connection was Kansa.





Devaki was married to a prince of the Vrisni clan named Vasudeva. He was the eldest of the ten sons and five daughters of his father, Sura,\* and he had ten wives of whom Devaki was the youngest.†

Though the Yadus of Mathura ruled over a very small kingdom, yet they had very high connections. They had many powerful relatives and allies.‡ Kansa married the two daughters of Jarasandha, the king of Magadha,§ who was then the most powerful potentate in all India. Vasudeva's five sisters were all married to some of the greatest Aryan potentates of Northern India. The eldest Pritha was married to Pandu, the prince of Kurujangala,|| and the fourth Srutasrava was married

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\* See Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV., Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XXIV.

† See Ibid, Part III., Sec. XV., Ibid Skanda X., Chapter XXIV.

‡ They were connected by marriage with many kingdoms such as Avanti, Magadha, Kuru, Karusha, Kakeya, Vidharva, Videha, Kosala, Mithila &c. &c. See Vishnu Purana, Part III., Sec. XIV.

§ Modern South Behar.

|| Modern Delhi.



to the most illustrious Damugosha, the king of Chedi.\*

Just after the marriage of Vasudeva and Devaki, a very great change came upon Mathura. On the day following, when the marriage ceremony was over, Kansa, in order to escort his sister Devaki to her new home, himself drove the chariot in which the newly married couple were proceeding to their own palace. The grand procession was slowly winding its course through the crowded streets of Mathura, when a deep voice was heard to rise above all other sounds. It said, "O fool, the eighth child of the damsel whom you are escorting will be the destroyer of your own life."†

The words thrilled through the crowd like a flash of lightning; an ominous silence fell over all: an indescribable sensation passed through the assembled multitude; Kansa

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\* Modern Allahabad.

† Both the Vishnu Purana and Vagavata say that the voice was heard in the sky, but Harivansa says that Kansa learnt from Narada that he would be slain by the eighth child of his sister Devaki. See Vishnu Purana, Part V. Sec. I. Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter I. See also Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 56th.



## THE KINGS OF MATHURA

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started up, and pulled the horses back. With a jerk the chariot stopped, and he stared back on the happy pair like an infuriated bull. He lost all self-control, seized his sister by the hair, and raised his sword to cut her down.

But Vasudeva fell on his knees and entreated him to spare her life. He solemnly promised that he would hand over to him every child that she would bring forth. With the weepings of his sister, with the entreaties of her husband and with the earnest implorings of the assembled thousands, Kansa was moved. He spared his sister's life and allowed her to repair to her recently married husband's home.





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## CHAPTER III

### THE PLOT AGAINST KANSA

THE awful words heard by Kansa preyed upon his mind. Though he tried to laugh them away, yet they remained fastened to his heart. He brooded over them, and as time wore on, they made deeper and deeper impressions on his mind till the fatal words made him sad, destroyed his appetite and drove his sleep away,—nay, they ran through his veins as so many streams of burning sulphur.

When he heard that his sister, Devaki, had conceived, he roared and foamed like a mad bull. He passed orders to throw both Devaki and Vasudeva into prison. He commanded that they should be kept imprisoned in the castle dungeon till their child was born. He did not stop there. He killed all the sons of Vasudeva that were born to him by his other wives. To make himself more safe and his position more secure, he usurped the throne and imprisoned his own father, the old king



Ugrasena. He beheaded all whom he suspected to be his enemies. The heads of many revered chiefs of the Yadu dynasty kissed the ground, and a reign of terror came over Mathura.\*

Many of the Yadus and the Vrisnis escaped with their wives and children from the kingdom of Mathura; many hid themselves in forests and hills, and many took shelter in other kingdoms.

King Kansa ruled over a most disaffected people. But he was too powerful, and so he did not care the least what cruelties he perpetrated, what sins he committed, or what oppressions he made.†

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\* Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter II., Slokas 1-4, says :—  
“O king, Kansa, being proud of his prowess and making an alliance with the people of Magadha, joined with Pralamba, Vaka, Chanura, Trinavarta, Agha, Keshi, Dhanuka, Vana, Vauma and other Asura kings and tyrannised over the Yadus. Having been fearfully persecuted by his terrible oppressions, they escaped to the Kuru, Panchala, Kakeya, Salya, Vidharva, Nishada, Videha and Kosala kingdoms. Only a few remained to serve Kansa.”

† In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 56th, Kansa says :—“Who is there in the world of men who could dare provoke me? I can with these my two long arms overwhelm the whole earth. From this day I shall persecute men, beasts, birds and other creatures that follow the celestials.”



But none of his subjects forgot the words so ominously uttered on the day when their beloved princess Devaki was proceeding to her newly married husband's home. They solemnly believed the words to be the heaven's prophecy. They, therefore, eagerly and anxiously,—nay hoping against all hope,—waited for the birth of the eighth son of that princess, for it was the only means of their deliverance from the cruel persecutions of their tyrant king. That son was to be their only saviour,—the saviour ordained by Providence.

It was natural that they should make strenuous efforts to save the children of Devaki, at least the eighth one.\* Many of the Yadu chiefs secretly communicated with Nanda, the

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\* Neither the Vishnu Purana, nor Harivansa, nor Vagavata, nor Bramha Purana says in so many words that there was a plot to save Devaki's child and to overthrow Kansa. But if we carefully study this portion of their narratives, we can come to no other conclusion than that the child was saved by a deep-laid conspiracy in which, perhaps, almost all the people of Mathura, besides the Gopas of Gokula and the Nagas of the forest, joined. The Mahavarata in more than one place gives us to understand that Kansa was destroyed through the united efforts of all the Vrishnis. In the Sava Parva, Chapter LXIII, Sloka 8. Vidura addresses Dhritarashtra thus—





chief of the Gopas. They also communicated with the chief of the Nagas,—the two nearest powerful men with whose help and co-operation they hoped to overthrow the tyrant. They left no stone unturned to save the child of Devaki,—the child whom they all believed to be the heaven's ordained Saviour of Mathura.

When all Mathura was eagerly expecting for the eighth conception of Devaki, Vasudeva's another wife, named Rohini, conceived. Kansa's persecutions had become so unbearable and the people had become so impatient that many of them thought the expected child of

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"The Andhakas, the Yadavas and the Bhojas, uniting together, abandoned Kansa. At the request (of the whole tribe), Kansa was killed by that slayer of foes, Krishna."

In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VIII., and in Vishnu purana Part V., Sec. VI., we find the priest of the Vrisni race, named Garga, secretly comes to Gokula and as secretly performs the initiatory rites of Krishna. In Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 36th, Kansa says :—"When they (Rama and Krishna) would be destroyed, their friends and allies, Vasudeva and other Vrisnis, Vojas and Dasaraha will easily be destroyed. I shall also destroy my avaricious father Ugrasena, his brother Devaka and others who are rebellious against me.

Vayu Purana, Chapter 34th, Slokas 98-200, distinctly says that there was a conspiracy and a secret plot to overthrow Kansa.



Rohini to be the identical one alluded to by the prophecy. They, therefore, determined to save it. Rohini was secretly removed to the nomad settlement and kept hidden in the house of Nanda,\* where in course of time a boy was born of her.

A few months after, Devaki conceived. Another strenuous effort was made to remove her out of the reach of the tyrant king. But she and her husband were kept prisoners under lock and key in a cell where none could reach them. Failing to remove her, the conspirators thought of removing the child as soon as it would be born. They bribed the guard, they won over the best confidants of the king, and secretly sent words to the Gopa and the Naga chiefs; they made every arrangement to make an exchange of Devaki's child with another. It was absolutely necessary to keep the birth of the child a dead secret, for if Kansa was not thus deceived, he would move heaven and earth to find out the child and destroy it. It would then be impossible to save the child from the fearful

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\* We shall later on quote those portions of the Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata where it is narrated how the child Krishna was saved and how an exchange of him was made with the child of Nanda.



## THE PLOT AGAINST KANSA

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wrath of the cruel king, wherever it might be kept.

But who would agree to allow his or her dear child to be exchanged with that of Devaki, knowing it fully well that it would be mercilessly destroyed by the cruel Kansa? Was there such a noble man or woman in all Mathura who could make this great sacrifice? Searches were made, and many people in and around Mathura were appealed to, till at last the great and noble Nanda offered his child, which was expected to be born almost simultaneously with that of the Vrisni princess.





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## CHAPTER IV

## THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA

It was the midnight of the 8th day of the Lunar month in the black fortnight of the fourth month of the Solar year,\* when the constellation *Rohini* (Aries) was in the ascendant and the constellation *Aswini* (Taurus) and others and also all the planets were favourable,—it was on that memorable night, some three thousand five hundred years ago, that Krishna was born in the prison cell of the Vrisni citadel in the holy city of Mathura.† One of his biographers says :—

“The moment became endued with all good properties. The sky became clear ; the stars shone in brilliancy ; the cities, the villages, the pastures and the mines, passed through a great change ; the waters of the rivers became purer ; the lakes and tanks shone in beauty with lotuses and lilies ; the

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\* It was Wednesday of the month of *Vadra* ( about the 1st day of September ).

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. III.



## THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA

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blossoms of wild trees opened up ; the birds began to sing in great delight : the *Kinnaras* and the *Gandharvas* sang ; the *Siddhas* and the *Charanas* recited hymns, the *Vydyadharas* and the *Apsaras* danced, the *Rishis* and the *Celestials*\* showered flowers on earth. At such an hour of the night, the Exalted One took his birth in the world."†

Another says :—"The pious obtained new delight : the strong winds were pacified, and the rivers flowed silently : the oceans made music with their murmurings ; the *Gandharvas* began to sing, and the *Apsaras* began to dance ; the celestials, stationed in the sky, began to shower flowers, and the holy fire glowed with a mild flame."‡

Only a few lines below, the same authors write that it was a very stormy and fearful night. It was a night when rain was pouring like a sheet of waters,—when blazing lightnings were flashing from one corner of the sky to the other,—when dreadful thunder was roaring

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\* The *Kinnaras*, *Gandharvas*, *Siddhas*, *Charanas*, *Vydyadharas*, *Apsaras* and the *Celestials* are higher beings than man. They are often mentioned in Sanskrit works.

† *Vagavata*, Skanda X., Chapter III., Slokas 1-8.

‡ *Vishnu Purana*, Part V., Sec. III., Slokas 3-5.





and fearful hurricane was blowing, shaking the earth to its very centre.

In this fearful night the child was born. As soon as it was born, Vasudeva wrapped it up with a cloth and hastily came out of the prison cell, the guards and the friends outside helping him to pass out secretly and noiselessly from the dungeon.\*

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\* We shall quote the descriptions of this portion of the story from the Vishnu Purana and Vagavata. We would ask our readers to form their own opinion.

Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. III., says :—"The guards and gate-keepers of Mathura were all charmed with *Yoga-nidra* (goddess of illusion) and none of them obstructed the passage of Vasudeva. It was raining heavily at that time, and the many-headed Naga, Shesha, followed Vasudeva, spreading his hoods over his head. And when he, with the child in his arms, crossed the *Jamuna*, deep and dangerous as it was containing many whirl-pools, its waters were silent and rose not above his knees.

Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter III., says :—"By the power of that illusion, the consciousness of the gate-keepers and the citizens was destroyed. They all fell into a deep sleep. The doors and the gates, barred with iron shutters and strongly bound with iron chains, gave way as soon as Vasudeva appeared before them with the child. The clouds roared and rained. (The Naga) Ananta went behind shadowing them with his hoods and thus protecting them from the rains.





## THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA

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Noiselessly did he pass out of the fort, and the Naga Chief escorted him up to the door of Nanda's house, where the child was silently exchanged with that of Jasada, the excellent wife of the nomad Chief. With Nanda's child, which was a girl, Vasudeva as silently and as quietly returned to the prison as he went out of it.

Very elaborate but strictly secret arrangements were made that night by the enemies of Kansa to save that auspicious child,—that Ordained Saviour of Mathura,—whom Kansa was as eager to destroy as they were to save. He was out-witted. The Vrisnis with the help of the nomad chief and the Naga chieftain managed not only to remove the child to a place of safety, but to deceive him in respect of the birth of the eighth child of Devaki.\*

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The Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 59th, does not mention any detail as to how the child was removed from the prison. It simply says that Vasudeva took the child to Nanda's house and there made the exchange.

\* If Kansa were not deceived, and if he had come to know that his destroyer had been already born, he would have destroyed all the children throughout his dominions, and Nanda's household would not have been spared. Even after killing the supposed eighth child of Devaki, he did not rest satisfied, for in the Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. IV., he says:—"Let us vigorously find out all young children upon



Next morning when intelligence was brought to Kansa that a female child had been born of Devaki, he wildly rushed to the prison, and notwithstanding the entreaties and supplications of his sister, he seized it by its legs and dashed it against the prison wall.\*

Destroying the eighth child of Devaki, Kansa felt himself safe. His anxiety was gone, his fear was removed; but he could not pardon his sister or her husband. He banished them both from his court and his city.†

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earth, and let every boy in whom there is unusual vigour be killed without mercy."

\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata say that as soon as the child was dashed against the stone, it rose up into the sky and developed into a goddess, who said, "O fool, he who shall kill thee has already taken his birth." But Vayu Purana, Chapter 34th, Slokas 201-203, says that the girl escaped, and she was secretly brought up in Mathura.

† We need not say that many miracles are narrated in the accounts of the birth of Krishna as given by the Puranas. We have not narrated them, as we shall not do it all through this work.



## CHAPTER V

## KRISHNA AS A CHILD

BUT he who would destroy him grew up day by day amongst cattle and kine. Hidden away from the sharp eyes and the cunning spies of the cruel tyrant, he grew up amongst the cow-herd boys and the nomad girls of the Vrindavana. He was nourished and nurtured as an idol not only of Gokula,\* but of all Mathura.†

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\* The name of the Gopa settlement was Gokula. It was also called Vraja.

† Only on a very few occasions, the early life of Krishna is mentioned in the Mahavarata. But we have already said in the Introduction that it is not a history of *his* life. The Mahavarata is the oldest of all the works on which we base our accounts. Therefore, before we write the history of the early life of Krishna, we are bound to place before our readers what this great work says about it. We get a very short account of Krishna's early life in the Mahavarata. In Sava Parva, Chapter XLI. Slokas 4-11, relate that Sisupala, the king of Chedi, thus abused him. We quote the passage :—

“You have once again given pain to our hearts by reciting the deeds of this man, such as his killing Putana and





The settlement of the Gopas lay extended on the banks of the *Jamuna*,—the tapering peaks of the beautiful *Govardhana* rising behind it and standing like its guardian angel.\*

others. O Bhishma, arrogant and fool as you are, and also desirous of praising Krishna, why does not your tongue split into a hundred parts? O Bhishma, how do you, superior as you are in knowledge, desire to praise this cow-herd whose evil reputation is told even by men of childish intelligence? O Bhishma, if he killed a vulture in his childhood, what is there to praise him for that act? What is there also in his killing two beasts, a horse and a bull, both ignorant of the science of war? O Bhishma, what is there wonderful if this man threw down by a kick an inanimate piece of wood, namely a waggon? O Bhishma, in my opinion there was nothing remarkable in this man's holding for a week the Govardhana hill which is like an ant-hill. O Bhishma, 'while sporting on the hills, this man ate a large quantity of food,' hearing these words of yours, many have been much astonished!"

It is a pity that there is an apparent gap between the Chapters XL and XLI, in the Mahavarata that we now possess; one chapter is evidently lost. It is a great loss to us, for in that chapter Bhishma narrated the achievements of Krishna's early life. In the passage we have quoted, Sisupala refers to this speech of Bhishma, but unfortunately the present Mahavarata does not contain it.

\* The village of Gokula is still in existence some five or six miles from Mathura. It is a straggling village with some modern temples. It is very doubtful whether the present



It was ornamented with innumerable charming creepers ; it was adorned with groves beautiful in their sylvan bowers. It resounded with the sweet tinklings of the anklets of the Gopa maidens moving about with milk-pots on their heads : it thrilled with the joyous laughter of merry boys driving cattle to their pens. With the bellowing of the cows, with the sweet silvery sounds of the bells tied round the necks of the calves, with the smell of milk, butter and *ghee*, it breathed a celestial fragrance. In this charming land of beauty and bliss, the child daily grew up as the idol of the land of Surasenaka.

His childhood, however, passed through many a crisis. He was once attacked with a fatal disease, but he miraculously escaped. His poet-biographers thus describe it in their own poetical way :—

“While they were thus living in Gokula, Putana, the child-killer,\* taking up Krishna

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site of Gokula was the original one. In one place, Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 60th says :—“He saw Vraja near the Govardhana hill adjacent to the bank of the *Jamuna*.” Modern Gokula is many miles off from the Govardhana hill.

\* Both in the Vagavata and Harivansa, Putana is described as a bird. In the Mahavarata also she has been





asleep at night, gave him her breast to suck. And whatever child is sucked by Putana at night dies instantly, having its limbs wearied and exhausted. But Krishna, laying hold of the breast of Putana with two hands, sucked it with such a violence that he drained off her life; and the terrible Putana, roaring aloud and giving way in every point, fell dead on the ground. Hearing her cries, the people of Gokula got up in great alarm. They saw Putana lying on the earth with Krishna in her arms. Snatching up Krishna, Jasada waved over him a cow-tail brush to guard him against

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described as such. The Harivansa, however, calls her the nurse of Kansa, but the Vagavata calls her a fearful demoness. Vishnu Purana describes her simply as a child killer. From a simple child-killer in the Vishnu Parana, Part V., Chapter V., she is turned into a bird and a nurse in the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 62nd. She then turns out to be a terrible giantess and a fearful demoness in the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VI. It is very difficult to say definitely what the authors of the Puranas really meant by Putana. Putana means a kind of bird, and again Putana means a sort of children's disease. In the Harivansa, Chapter VI, Slokas 11-12, we had it distinctly mentioned that at the time when Krishna was born, Vrindavana was infested with various kinds of fearful birds. Again in one of our greatest works on medicine, namely Susruta, we find in its Uttara





evil, while Nanda placed dried cow-dung powder over his head.”\*

A few months after, he met with another very serious accident. One day Jasoda left him asleep underneath a waggon, but the child soon awoke and cried for breasts. Finding his mother away, he began to kick up his feet. Thus struck his feet against the wheels of the waggon. He was endued with such extraordinary strength that the waggon was immediately overturned, and all the pots and pans were upset and broken. All the people came and exclaiming, “Alas ! Alas !” Nanda hurriedly took him up on his lap, and Jasoda offered worship to the broken pots and pans and to the overturned waggon with curds, flowers, fruits and unbruised grains.†

A few months more passed away. The child was one day lying on the green grass, smiling sweetly and giving inexpressible joy to all the Gopa maidens and matrons that were

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Tantra, Chapter 27th and 37th, that Putana is a fearful children's disease. The last inference we have adopted.

\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter V.

† Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 26th says that Krishna was three months old when this incident took place. In the Harivansa the overturning of the waggon precedes the death of Putana.



sitting around him. A fearful bird suddenly pounced upon him and carried him away in its talons.\* A great uproar was made; the women shrieked, the boys roared; the men rushed out with clubs and sticks, but the bird soared higher and higher, till at last it was seen to drop. It fell only a few yards from the spot from which it carried away the child. Men, women and children ran towards the place; they saw that the bird was dead, but the child was safe, holding tightly its long throat and lying on its soft feathery breast.†

Thus passed his childhood through many serious crises. Nanda and his people became more and more cautious to keep him out of harm's way. They had undertaken a very serious and solemn task; they had to protect and bring up the saviour of their country. As time wore on, they more and more seriously felt the weight of the responsibility that lay on their head.

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\* Vagavata Skanda X., Chapter 26th says that Krishna was one year old when this incident took place.

† This story is not found in the Vishnu Purana or in the Harivansa. It is mentioned only in the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VII. It says that this bird was a demon named Trinavarta, a servant of Kansa.



When the child was yet in its first year, the great priest of the Vrisni race, Garga, one day secretly came to Gokula; and there did he secretly perform the initiatory rites\* of the two boys,—namely the son of Rohini and that of Devaki. He named the former Rama† and the latter Krishna. Having done all that was necessary, he as secretly returned to Mathura.‡

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\* If our readers are curious to learn what sort of ceremonies these initiatory rites were, we would refer them to that celebrated Sanskrit work called the *Kalpa Sutra*. This work is divided into three parts, namely (1) *Sraitya Sutra*, (2) *Grihya Sutra* and (3) *Samayanacharika Sutra*. The first contains the accounts of all the principal Sacrifices (Yagmas), the second, all rites that were performed on a man from his birth to death and the third, the rules of *Brahmachariya* (scholastic life), daily prayers &c. These three works were written or compiled immediately after the death of Krishna. They are therefore the best history of the social, religious and political state of India of that age. The *Kalpa Sutra* has been translated and incorporated in the *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by Professor Max Muller.

† As usual Rama had many other names, such as Vsia-rama, Baladeva, Sankarsana &c., &c. Krishna had one hundred and eight names.

‡ The Harivansa does not mention the performance of the initiatory rites by Garga.





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## CHAPTER VI

## KRISHNA AS A BOY

KRISHNA daily grew up and soon learnt to walk. He was extremely handsome in person and beautiful in appearance.\* He was endued with extra-ordinary physical strength and supernatural energy; his

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\* The general idea is that the complexion of Krishna was black. The idea has arisen from the fact that the meaning of the word "Krishna" is "black." But from the careful study of the Puranas and the Mahavarata, we find his complexion was far from being "black." At the time when he was born, the Aryans were a *golden race*. The original colour of their complexion had not then undergone any change, though the climate of the plains of India had already begun to tell upon it. A few had already been born who were not as golden as the rest, and amongst them we might place Krishna, Arjuna, Draupadi and others. All these people were called Krishna (black) in contradistinction to others who were all golden in complexion. It clearly signifies that men of such complexion were then very rare amongst the Aryans. The complexion of Krishna was not "black," but was like the colour of "the newly budded blade of grass," which is that of shining gold with a very faint brilliancy of black or blue. Krishna also means "Anointed."



sprightliness was phenomenal and his merriment was extreme. His merry laughter thrilled through the village, and his sweet words charmed its every heart.

The little Krishna became the cynosure of all eyes. All the boys and girls of Gokula were slowly drawn towards him; they forgot their play-mates,—their brothers and sisters,—nay even their own parents. To live with him, to play with him and to pass their time with him were their greatest joy. Early at the dawn of day, even when the sun had not appeared on the horizon, they all rose from their beds and ran to the door of Nanda's house; and as soon as he came leaping forward to meet them, they took hold of his hands and ran away with him to play.

He was not only the beloved of the boys and the girls, but all the men and the women of Gokula, both young and old, loved him more than their own children. They knew not why they felt for him such unusual affection;—they knew not why they grew so fond of him. With the birth of Krishna love pervaded the atmosphere of Gokula; and as he grew up, a great change slowly and silently came upon the people. They began to love one another more than they did before.



Disputes and dissensions disappeared, and happiness reigned in every house.\*

Krishna was here, there and everywhere. Now he was amongst the calves pulling them by the tails : now he was on the top of the tree, imitating the sweet notes of the birds. Now he was dancing on the lawn to the great delight of the maidens ; now he was running amidst the heaps of ashes and fifth to the great consternation of the matrons.† The over-sprightliness of little Krishna filled Jasada with great alarm : the boy ran dashing amongst the wild bulls and vicious cows. He ran after ferocious wolves and rabid Jackals ;

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\* In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XIII., Slokas 36-37, Valadeva, marking this wonderful manifestation of love in Vrindavana, says,—“What wonder is this ? As the love of the Gokula people formerly increased daily for Krishna, so it does now for their own children. My mind also is full of love for them. What is this *Maya* (illusion) ?

† It appears that Krishna's conduct was not above all complaints. We find in the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter VIII., a deputation of Gokula women waited upon Jasada with a long list of grievances and complaints against him. This is what they said,—“Your boy sometimes lets loose the calves when they should be kept tied. If we reproach him, he laughs and runs away. Like a thief he sometimes eats up our curd and milk. What he cannot eat, he gives away to the monkeys.”





he got on the top of the tallest trees, and thence jumped down into the rushing currents of the *Jamuna*. He had a thousand and one hair-breadth escapes. Though the loving eyes of Jasada,—nay of all the women of Gokula,—were upon him, yet they could not keep him out of the path of danger. To keep him quiet in one place was as impossible to them as to stop the rolling and foaming currents of the river that rolled by their village. Not to speak of loving Jasada, the hearts of all the Gokula women were in a continuous trepidation for his sake. They could not attend to their household duties.

One day Jasada got tired of watching him. She ran after him, and after catching him, she tied a strong rope round his waist. Then dragging him near a wooden mortar,\* she tied the other end of the rope to it and kept him fastened there.

When she went away to look after her household duties, Krishna tried to extricate himself from the long rope tied round his waist. In his attempt to do it, he began to

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\* These mortars were made of the trunks of big trees. They were shaped like the letter X., one side being dug out to make a hole in which grains were put and then pounded by a long wooden pestle. These mortars were generally one maund and a half in weight.



drag the heavy mortar after him. It fell on its side and then rolled after him till it stuck fast athwart two *Arjuna*\* trees. He pulled the rope with all his might, and soon were the two big trees uprooted; they then fell with a tremendous noise.

Hearing the cracking noise, the inhabitants of Vraja came to see what the matter was. They saw the two huge trees with broken branches and stems lying on the ground and the boy stuck between them with a long rope tightened round his waist. He was laughing;—† he was a stranger to fear.‡

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\* These trees are generally of small size. They are called in Bengali and English *Kuruchi*, in Latin *Wrightia anti-dysenterica*.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.

‡ The Puranas say that these two trees were in fact two celestial beings called *Jakshas*, who were converted into trees by a curse,—a state from which they were relieved by Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, who broke down these two trees in his childhood.

The Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter IX., Slokas 22-23 says :—"These two trees in their previous life were the two sons of Kuvera (the god of wealth). For their great pride, they were converted into trees by the curse of Narada. They were named Nalakuvera and Manigriva. Both of them were very handsome." The Vagavata says it required many pieces of ropes before Jasada could bind Krishna. All the Puranas say that because he was thus bound, he was called *Domudara*.



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## CHAPTER VII

## KRISHNA IN THE VRINDAVANA

ON account of the appearance of Putana and Brinavarta, and of the over-turning of the waggon and the up-rooting of the trees, the mind of Nanda was filled with misgivings. The elders took these circumstances with alarm; they considered them as evil omens. The thought of leaving Gokula and looking for some other forest for their habitation and pasture-ground was uppermost in every one's mind.

When such was the state of the mind of the Gokula people, something happened which hastened the departure of the Gopas from their ancient abode. Hundreds of ferocious wolves infested the forest. They made great havocks amongst the calves, and grew to be an intolerable pest.\* The whole country was filled with

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\* This story is found only in the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 64th. It runs to the effect that in order to take the Gopas to the beautiful Vrindavana, Krishna himself created these wolves from the down of his body.





them, and their depredations left the Gopas on other alternative than to leave Gokula and seek some other pasture-ground.

One day they all met together and thus addressed their chief:—"We cannot any longer remain in this place. Let us go to some other part of the forest. Many evil omens threaten us here with destruction. Let us leave this place and go to the *Vrindavana*."\* Nanda replied, "If you consider that we must leave Vraja to-day, then ask all to get ready at once. Let them not make any delay."†

So the order was passed. A great commotion broke out all over the village, and preparations were being made everywhere. The well-fed bulls were soon yoked to the waggons; the tents were pulled down and the canvas-sheds were rolled up into bundles. Pots and pans were placed on the waggons and the children, the old and the infirm, took their seats on them. Conchs and trumpets were blown, and the kine and the calves were brought out

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\* The Vagavata says that one wise old man, named Upananda, spoke these words to Nanda, but the Vishnu Purana or Harivansa does not mention any name. Vishnu Purana, however, says that Vrindavana was selected by Krishna himself.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.



of the pens. The Gopa maidens, clad in various coloured clothes and adorned with beautiful ear-rings, walked with milk-pots on their heads. They passed out of Gokula in rows, singing their sweet and melodious rural songs.\* The Gopas,—young and old,—armed with various weapons, drove before them the flocks of kine and calves, while their priests followed them chanting the hymns.

Soon did they leave behind them their once happy and beautiful Gokula. It became then filled with crows, dogs, jackals and wolves. All its life and beauty being gone, it looked like a dreary desert.

Slowly did they move on, resounding all the forest with their shouts, with the thrilling sounds of their trumpets, with their songs, and with their merry peals of laughter and uproarious jokes, till at last they arrived at the beautiful wood of *Vrindavana*. There did they stop placing their waggons in the form of a crescent.† Within that semi-circle, protected on three sides by their heavy waggons, they drove in their cattle.

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\* This description is taken from Vishnu Purana; Part V., Sec. VI., Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 69th, and Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XI.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI.



The men at once began to cut down the trees with their axes, and the women to cleanse the grounds with their broomsticks. Tents were pitched and canvas-sheds were raised, pots and pans were taken down from the waggons, and fires were lit all over the place. The forest which had been echoed only with the melodious notes of the birds was now resounded with the shouts of the Gopas. The wild animals fled in fear, the beautiful stags and the gentle deer looked up in wonder; the peacocks wildly shrieked and the birds flew away from their nests.\*

Nanda and his clan soon settled down in their new home, and when night stepped in, silence slowly pervaded the atmosphere.

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\* Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 65th.





## CHAPTER VIII

## FIGHT WITH KALIYA

IN the latter end of the summer the Gopas came to the *Vrindavana*,\* and the rainy season soon set in. The two boys, Rama and Krishna along with innumerable other Gopa boys, daily went out to tend the cattle. When the shade of evening fell over the forest, when the sun rolled down the horizon gilding the leaves of the trees with glittering gold, they then blew their pipes, collected their cattle, and winded back their steps towards their home, singing in chorus the sweetest song that was ever heard in the solitude of a wild forest.

But the *Vrindavana* was not as free from danger as it was charming and beautiful. The best part of it was infested by the wild Nagas

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\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VI., and Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 64th say that Krishna was seven years of age when he came to the *Vrindavana*. but Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XII., Sloka 36, says that he was only five.



whose chief, Kaliya,\* ruled over a vast tract. It also abounded in various kinds of ferocious animals. Thus the Gopas were neither undisturbed, nor secure in their new home. They were always in great fear of the fierce Nagas and the more fearful wild beasts. But the wonderful boy who was daily blazing up amongst them like a mass of fire soon came to their rescue.†

When he saw that his beloved parents, his dear playmates, his fellow-men and women were all troubled by the wild animals and the fierce Nagas, he resolved to rid the forest of all its pests.‡

One day when he went out to tend the

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\* All the Puranas mention this Naga, but they describe him as a "snake." We shall quote later on some passages from the Vishnu Purana which will show that we are justified in rejecting the theory that he was a "snake."

† In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 13th, the Gopas say,—“Through your favour this entire Gopa settlement has been rid of all its enemies and made a blessed region.”

‡ Vishnu Purana and Harivansa mention two wild animals, namely *Arishta*, a bull, and *Keshin*, a horse, which Krishna killed before he left Vrindavana for Mathura. But the Vagavata speaks of the destruction of five others, namely *Vatsa*, a calf, *Vaka*, a crane, *Agha*, a snake, *Sankhachura*, a Jaksha, and *Boma*, an Asura. We have not described in this work the destruction of any wild animals by Krishna.



cattle, he secretly slipped away from his companions and boldly walked into the Naga settlement.\* He challenged the Naga chief to a single combat. A fierce encounter ensued, and the delicate boy of nine beat the stalwart, black Naga. The noise brought out all the wildmen

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We shall, therefore, quote one short passage from Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XIV.

"One evening whilst Krishna was engaged in the *Rasha* dance, the demon Arishta, disguised as a bull, came there striking terror into the hearts of all. Being seized with fear on seeing that dreadful bull, the cow-herds and their females cried out, "Krishna ! Krishna !" — Krishna then shouted and slapped his arms in defiance. When the demon heard his voice, he turned upon his challenger ; and fixing his eyes and pointing his horns at the belly of Krishna, he ran furiously upon him. Krishna did not stir a single pace, but, smiling in sport and derision, he awaited the approach of the bull, He then seized him and held him by the horns, whilst he pressed his sides by his knees. He then wrung his throat as if it were but a piece of wet cloth. Then tearing off one of the horns, he beat the dreadful demon with it until he died vomiting blood."

\* The Puranas have described Kaliya as a fearful snake living at the bottom of a lake. They say that Krishna dived down and fought with him. Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th, says—"Situated only two miles north of the Gopa settlement, there was an extensive lake." Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVI., Sloka 6, says,—"O king, there was a lake in the Kalindi (*Jamuna*)."





from their huts. They stood gazing in wonder at the extraordinary boy who was fighting with their powerful chief.

Here in the forest the Gopa boys, missing their beloved Krishna, ran to the spot whence the uproar came. When they saw what Krishna was after, they were seized with great alarm. They ran back to their homes as quickly as their legs could carry them, screaming all the way, "Krishna has foolishly jumped into the lake of the Kaliya Naga."\*

His biographer then add†,—“Hearing these words which appeared to them as the bursting of thunder, the Gopas and their wives, with Jasada at their head, proceeded in all speed towards the lake. ‘Alas! where is Krishna gone!’ they cried. Being greatly bewildered and terrified, Jasada and the other Gopa women ran in all possible haste. The mighty Rama and the Gopa chief Nanda and the other Gopas all soon came to the bank of the *Jamuna*, and there they saw him surrounded by the innumerable Nagas. Nanda and Jasada

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\* This is a quotation from Vishnu Purana. The Puranas, as we have already said, have described Kaliya as a snake living at the bottom of a lake.

† Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII.



were frightened out of their wits. The wives of the other cow-herds, stricken with grief, wept aloud."

But in the meanwhile Krishna had thrown the great Naga chief down on the ground. He had pressed him to the earth and stood on his prostrate body. The Naga had fainted, and his life was at his victor's mercy. Seeing their great chief thus discomfited by a mere boy,—nay a child,—the Nagas in great consternation fled in all directions. Their women, struck with awe, came trembling and weeping to Krishna with their folded hands. They fell on their knees and entreated him to spare the life of their chief. Krishna smiled and allowed the half dead Naga to rise. He spared his life, but he commanded him to leave the forest at once. He readily obeyed and left *Vrindavana* that very day with all his people.\*

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\* It is extremely difficult to make out what the authors of the Puranas really meant by Krishna's combat with Kaliya. It is capable of three interpretations, namely :—

(a) That he really killed a very dangerous snake that infested the waters of the *Jamuna*.

(b) That he fought with the chief of the wild-men and drove him from the *Vrindavana*.

(c) That it is an allegory signifying that Krishna who was an incarnation of God subdued the influence of Kalya which means Time.





His biographer continues,—“When the Nāga had departed, the cow-herds received back Krishna as one risen from the dead. They embraced him and bathed his forehead with tears of joy.”\*

They were all filled with great astonishment at the undreamt-of exploit of the wonderful boy. They felt an undescribable awe and respect for him. From that day that little boy virtually became their guide, leader and chief.

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We have rejected the first and the third theories and accepted the second. If Kaliya were really a snake, the Puranas would have described this affair exactly in the way they have described the destruction of the other animals by Krishna. They would not have made Kaliya a snake-god and given him human shape, features, speech &c. Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII., says,—“He was surrounded by many other snakes and hundreds of serpent nymphs, adorned with rich ornaments, whose ear-rings glittered with brilliancy as the wearers moved along.” The Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVI., says,—“His (Kaliya's) wives came to him with dishevelled hair and disordered clothes.”

And again if it were such a sublime allegory, the authors of the Puranas would have put it in the later period of Krishna's life when he was acknowledged to be God, instead of at a period when he was but a boy, and when none knew what stuff he was made of. We believe, therefore, that the whole affair was simply his successful encounter with a strong wild-man.

\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. VII.





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## CHAPTER IX

## SPORTS IN THE FOREST

ONE day Krishna desired to hold a grand picnic\* in the beautiful forest which was then in its greatest luxuriance. Early in the morning he rose from his bed and awoke his mother. He asked for his clothes, his horn, his pipe; he wished to go away to tend the kine. Loving Jasada put on his head a beautiful crown made of peacock's plumes; she placed round his neck a garland of wild flowers. His arms were decked with ornaments made of glass beads and corals, his feet were adorned with the anklets that tinkled as he went along. A long yellow sheet hang from his shoulders down to his knees and a piece of cloth was girded round his loins.† He was charmingly

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\* Vishnu Purana and Harivansa do not record the picnic, but they describe the sports. It is only the Vagavata which says that Krishna held a grand picnic in the forest.

† The lovely appearance of Krishna of Vrindavana is well-known all over India. His image may be seen in innumerable temples. All the Puranas describe him as such. See Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XI, Slokas 5-6.



handsome, and beautiful was his enchanting robe. His noble and lovely appearance as he was seen in the Vrindavana has come down to us from generation to generation through many hundreds of years, but it is still as fresh in the memory of India as it was three thousand five hundred years ago in the Gopa settlement in the forest of Mathura.

Awaking the boys and blowing his horn, he came out of the village, and hundreds of lovely boys hastened after him with horns, whips and pipes in their hands. They brought together their calves and kine; and mingling them with those driven by Krishna, they merrily went on,—some dancing, some singing, and others playing on their pipes.

As they passed through the settlement, hundreds of pretty girls ran up to the doors of their huts. They looked at the procession with feelings of joy and admiration. Fond Jasada with tears in her eyes stood at the threshold of her house gazing at Krishna as long as he remained in sight. She stood there mentally praying for his safe return.

When at last the boys reached the pasture-ground, they let loose their cattle to graze. They then began to play, sport and frolic about. Some danced with the peacocks, some



played on their pipes; some sang with the bees, some imitated the sweet notes of the *Kokilas*: some ran after the shadows of the birds that flew along the sky, some walked whirling about, mimicking the slow and majestic motion of the swan, and some pulled the monkeys by the tail, and with them leaped from bough to bough. The whole forest thus rolled in a sea of joy and merriment with their hearty laughter and joyous shouts. Krishna played with them all. Those hundreds of loving boys loved him with all the love they felt in their innocent little hearts. And so equally flowed the wonderful love of that wonderful boy that one and all of them were individually conscious that Krishna loved him the best.\*

At last the boys gathered together and stood round their beloved leader. They sang in chorus joining their sweet strains with those of their friend and guide. When Krishna sang, the whole forest was filled with a celestial cadence. The deer stood spell-bound, the peacock danced, the birds lay quiet on the trees,—all stood enchanted as his sweet voice thrilled through the air, rising higher

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\* This description is taken from the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XII., Slokas 1-9.





and higher till all seemed to be a sea of bliss.\*

He then took up his ever sweet pipe and played on it some of his favourite tunes. Its sweet notes rent the air, enchanting all the birds and beasts. It pierced through the higher and higher strata of the atmosphere. In the distant Gopa settlement, the men raised their heads and listened to it, the women gave up their household duties, the maidens felt an undescribable uneasiness in their minds, and the little girls began to dance with its music.†

When the sun passed the meridian, Krishna took the boys to the beautiful banks of the *Jamuna*. There did they all sit down to their homely luncheon. They talked, they laughed, they made themselves merry as they ate on. Some of them said, "O Rama, O Krishna, there is a nice palmyra grove close by. The trees are loaded with ripe fruits, the smell of which perfumes the air. But the grove is infested by an wild ass. None could

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\* In all the Puranas, in the Harivansa, and also in the Mahavarata, Krishna is held to be one of the best and the greatest songsters and musicians of his age. He was a genius in music, as he was in everything else.

† His playing on the pipe is one of the incidents of his life that is known even to a child in India.



venture near it. We like very much to taste some of these fruits; will you try to get us some ?”\*

Rama and Krishna rose and went to the palmyra grove. It was but a moment's task for the very powerful Rama to kill the brute. He caught hold of its hind legs and hurled it round till it was dead. They then secured many fruits and came back to their play-mates.

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\* Vishnu Purana does not mention any names, but the Vagavata says the boys, named Sudama, Suvala and others, spoke of the fruits to Rama and Krishna. Harivansa, however, says that it was Krishna himself who proposed to get them.



## CHAPTER X

## THE GREAT BANIAN TREE

THERE was a very gigantic Banian tree in one part of the forest.\* In their rambles the boys discovered it one day, and since then it became the chief place of their meeting. When merry and playful, they played and sported underneath its extensive shade, and when tired and fatigued, they rested and slept under this grand sylvan canopy.

It stood covering a very large space of ground. It stood with many out-spreading branches, each of which had sent down innumerable off-shoots to the ground. Beautiful orchids of various charming colours hang from its overhanging boughs; creepers in flowers ran up entwining its branches; ferns in delightful groups lay near and about its stupendous trunk. Wild flowers in all the colours of the rainbow filled the air with their sweet

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\* This gigantic Banian tree has been called by all the Puranas as the great *Bhandira Bata*. It was certainly a very remarkable tree.





## THE GREAT BANIAN TREE

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fragrance. Birds from within its dense foliage sent forth their sweet melodious notes,—it was an exquisite sylvan bower which Nature had made with all the arts that She alone possessed.\*

Underneath this grand tree, Krishna with his play-mates daily held various sports. They were exceedingly delightful, exciting and enticing, and drew innumerable boys from far and near. Whoever came was heartily welcomed by Krishna and his companions, and as time wore on, hundreds multiplied into thousands that followed Krishna as shadow follows the substance.†

Their sports were various. Sometimes they wrestled and sometimes they boxed; now

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\* This description is taken from the Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 67th.

† The Puranas do not say that other boys besides the cow-herds used to come and join in the sports organized by Krishna. But by a careful study of them all, we have come to the conclusion that such was the case. Our readers will find in this chapter that one Pralamba was killed by Rama. He came and joined in the sport, though his presence was not noticed. If outsiders were not in the habit of coming to the sports, Pralamba would not have been able to pass unobserved by at least Krishna, who knew all his play-mates and all the cow-herd boys of the Vrindavana by name. Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVIII., Sloka 18, however, says that Krishna marked his presence from the beginning.



they threw stones and now they fought with the wildest bull that was in their flock. Sometimes they held competitions in running, jumping and riding, and sometimes in swimming, rowing and diving. Often did Krishna divide the boys into two parties and organise a battle with all the requisites of war.\* But they never fought in anger and vengeance and never fell out amongst themselves. No ill will was ever bred in that land of love and amity.†

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\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. IX., says,—“Those two highly powerful brothers engaged in exercises, in swinging upon the boughs of trees, in boxing and wrestling and in hurling stones.”

Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 72nd, says,—“Those two lion-like heroes cheerfully engaged in various sorts of fights and warfare with the cow-herd boys.”

Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter XVIII., says,—Rama and Krishna engaged themselves sometimes in walking, sometimes in throwing stones, sometimes in dragging one another and sometimes in wrestling.”

Our readers will find later on that when Krishna became the great Prince of Mathura and Dwarka, he raised a great army from amongst these boys. In the great battle of Kurukshetra, these Gopa warriors, who were known by the name of *Sansaptakas*, were the ablest soldiers and the greatest heroes. See Mahavarata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter VII.

† See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. IX.





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One of his biographers goes on to say,—  
“One day having seen Krishna and Rama thus engaged in sports, the Asura Pralamba came there in the guise of a cow-herd boy with the intention of stealthily carrying them off into the deepest part of the forest where he could easily murder them. That chief of the Asuras, assuming a human shape, mixed with the boys unobserved and unsuspected.”\*

“The boys were then playing at the game of leaping like deer,—two and two together. Krishna was matched with Sudama, and Rama with Pralamba. The rest were matched with the other boys, and they all went leaping along, two and two together. Krishna and Rama beat their respective adversaries. Then according to the rules of the play, the defeated boys began to carry their victors on their shoulders. They had thus to go for a certain

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\* Except this Pralamba and Kaliya, all the other creatures that Krishna and Rama killed in the Vrindavana have been distinctly described in the Puranas as wild animals. But Pralamba has been described as an *Asura* and Kaliya as a *Naga*. All the Oriental scholars now agree in saying that the Danavas, Asuras, Nagas &c., of the Puranas were but the primitive peoples of India who were driven away by their Aryan invaders. Pralamba, therefore, evidently belonged to one of these races.





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number of times from the starting-place to the great Banian tree. When they were thus playing, Pralamba with Rama on his shoulders attempted to run away into the deep forest. "O Krishna," cried Rama, "I am carried off by a villain disguised as a cow-herd boy. Tell me, what should I do." Krishna laughed and said, "Do away with the villain by battering out his brains." No sooner were those words uttered, than Rama pressed Pralamba with his knees, and striking him on the head and face with his fists, he beat out his eyes and battered his brains down. Vomitting blood, Pralamba fell on the ground and died."\*

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\* The Puranas describe many other encounters of Krishna with many other Asuras, described as birds and beasts. For fear of repetition, we do not describe them.



## CHAPTER XI

## THE INDRA YAGMA

THE rains had been over; and the autumn with its clear, beautiful and bright sky appeared. The people of Vraja were, as usual, making grand preparations for their great annual festival. It was a Sacrifice in honour of Indra, their national God.\*

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\* Indra-worship is the latest feature of the Vedic religion. Indra was not originally the chief God of the Aryans. In the earlier Riks of the Rig-Veda, his name is hardly met with. Varuna was then the chief God. The Greek *Uranus* and the Vedic *Varunas* are evidently the same deity. See (a) Grote's *Greece*, Vol. I., p. 6. and (b) *Oxford Essays for 1856*, p. 41.

The Rig-Veda, Mandala 5, Sukta 85, Rik 1, and *Ibid*, mandala 1, Sukta 24, Rik 7, and also Gloss of Sayanachariya on the Rig-Veda, Mandala 2, Sukta 89, Rik 3, bear out our assertion. It appears that Indra-worship was not introduced into India without a struggle. In many Mantras of the Rig-Veda, the very existence of Indra is doubted (Rig-Veda, 2-12-5). In many Mantras an apparent slight has been cast upon him (Rig-Veda 1-170-3). Again in many Mantras, men are abused as being not Indra-worshippers (Rig-Veda, 1-133-1). But finally Indra became supreme and Varuna





Seeing them busily and anxiously engaged in making preparations for a great festival, Krishna, out of curiosity, asked the elders, "What is this ceremony that you intend to perform?" They replied, "Indra is the lord of the clouds and water. At his bidding the clouds pour down water on earth, by which grain is produced, and on which we and other beings live. It is due to this that the cows bear calves, and give milk, and are happy and well-nourished. Whereon the clouds pour water, the earth is neither barren of corn, nor bare of verdure, nor is man stricken with hunger. Having drunk the milk of the earth by means of the rays of the sun, Indra, the giver of water, pours it down again on earth for the sustenance of all the worlds. For this reason, kings and princes offer sacrifices to Indra at the end of the rainy season ; and so also do we, and so do other people."\*

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became only a subordinate deity, viz. that of water. When Krishna was born, Indra was the chief God of the Aryans, but it will be found that he not only ignored the Indra-worship, but he sometimes denied the sanctity of the Vedas. See the Vagavata Gita, Chapter II., Slokas, 42-43, and also Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, Vol. I., pp. 85-86, and Part II., p. 389, and Max Muller's Science of Language, pp. 208-210.

\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. V.





To them Krishna thus replied, "What have we to do with Indra? Cattle and mountains are our gods." Then turning to his father he said, "Father, we are neither tillers nor traders; we are but nomads, sojourning in the woods and in the forests. The kine are our mainstay; therefore the hills, the forests and the cows are our gods. He who enjoys benefits from one, but worships another never obtains prosperity in this life or in the life to come. Therefore let us celebrate a great Sacrifice in honour of the hill *Govardhana*. In this Sacrifice let us feed our kine and also all the poor and the destitute. Let us make ourselves merry in every way."\*

So profound was the love, respect and regard of the Gopas for Krishna that they silently and submissively obeyed him. At his word they abandoned their forefather's religion, forsook their ancient rites, and followed him to the hill of *Govardhana* to worship Nature.†

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\* The speech of Krishna is almost word for word the same in the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa. The speech in the Vagavata is more elaborate and philosophical. We have given it in brief.

† As this story has found place in every Purana, we cannot reject it as a fiction. It is quite evident that the boy introduced a thoroughly new religion amongst the Gopas led



Men, women and children assembled at the foot of the beautiful hill, and for three days\* together there was nothing but merriment amongst the simple and happy nomads of the charming forest of *Vrindavana*. Kine and buffaloes were killed in hundreds,† goats and sheep were sacrificed in thousands, milk was gathered in abundance, and eatables of every description were collected from every part of that vast Gopa settlement.‡

Boys and girls in merry circles danced hand in hand ; maidens and matrons sent forth their melodious voice ; the Gopas filled the atmosphere with their sweet songs. Drums,

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by Nanda. Our readers will find later on that Krishna preached and introduced in the world the religion of—we can briefly describe it as—*worshipping Nature*, which is the visible manifestation of God, and *performing Duty*, which is the enjoined work of human life. His Sacrifice in honour of the hill and the cows was but the germ of the great religion that he preached in his later life.

\* *Harivansa*, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 73rd, says that the festival was continued for three days, but Vishnu Purana and Vagavata do not say any thing.

† See *Harivansa*, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 73.

‡ All the Puranas say that when food was offered to the hill, Krishna ate it up, although the Gopas considered that the Govardhana in its own manifested form ate their offerings.



trumpets and pipes were played, conchs were blown, incense was burnt, hymns were chanted and odes were sung,—it was a sea of merriment, enjoyment and happiness from beginning to end.

In this grand festivity Krishna was the central figure. He was the brilliant moon from which flowed the sweet and soft beams of bliss that played on the breast of the charming hill of *Govardhana*.

On the last day, the Gopas gathered their cattle and kine, and decorated them with all the art they possessed. Men, women and children in their gala dress, blowing their pipes and beating their drums, then began to circumambulate the great hill. Krishna walked at the head of this grand and wonderful procession. It was a magnificent sight,—the boy of ten led behind him a great clan to a land of joy, comfort and bliss.

Thus did he raise the Gopas from Nature's simplicity to Nature's sublimity. Thus did he bring in culture, civilisation and religion amongst men unlettered, wild and barbarous. Thus did he introduce Heaven's light where darkness of superstition reigned.\*

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\* After describing this newly introduced Sacrifice, all the Puranas give an account of an extraordinary event, namely





It was an extraordinary event, and the Gopas were struck with astonishment and awe. They thus spoke to him, "Seeing your powers, we do not look upon you as human. O Krishna ! the women, the children and the old

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Krishna's raising up the *Govardhana* hill and holding it for seven days on the tip of one of his fingers. It is mentioned even in the *Mahavarata*, *Sava Parva*, Chapter LXI., Sloka 9. It says,—

"O Bhishma, in my opinion there is nothing wonderful in this man's holding for a week the *Govardhana* hill which is like an ant-hill."

It is said that Indra was enraged at the slight cast upon him by the Gopas thus performing a new Sacrifice. He, therefore, ordered his clouds to shower on for seven days and nights together. In this fearful inclemency of weather, the cow-herds suffered very much. Their cows and calves died by hundreds. To protect them from the rains, Krishna raised the hill and the Gopas took shelter under it. Indra then acknowledged his defeat, came to Krishna propitiated him with an ode and went away after making friends of him.

The *Govardhana* hill is still in existence ; it is not an ant-hill as *Sisupala* said. It is impossible to believe that a boy of ten years of age, or for the matter of that, any being in human form, could have raised it and held it on his finger. But the story is found in every *Purana*, even in the *Mahavarata* ; therefore we believe there is something in it which it is now impossible to make out. The following suggestions, however, might be made :—



## THE INDRA YAGMA

CSL

are all pleased with you. Even all the celestials together cannot perform the deeds you have done. Be you a god, a demon, a Yaksha, a Gandharva, or whatever order of being you may,—we love and respect you, for you are our friend.”\*

When they had finished, Krishna remained silent for some time as if greatly touched. Then he spoke thus to them, “If you are not ashamed of my relationship, if I have deserved your praise, then what need is there thus to discuss about me? If you have any love for me, if I merit your praise, then consider me as your friend. I am neither a god, nor a

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(a) It is possible that there was a heavy down-pour when the Gopas were engaged in their new sacrifice, and that by some means adopted by Krishna,—it might be that he dug out a big cave in which the nomad people with their cattle and kine took shelter,—they were protected in this fearful inclemency of weather.

(b) It may be that it is but an allegory signifying that the Indra-worshippers, finding their God slighted, attacked the Gopas and made an attempt to destroy their new Sacrifice, and that Krishna in this armed attack protected the hill on which the Gopas took shelter.

Whatever it be, there is no doubt that something very extraordinary was done by him at this period of his life.

\* The Vagavata says he was seven years of age at this period of his life, but Harivansa says he was ten.



SRIKRISHNA

CSL

Gandharva, nor a Yaksha, nor a demon. I am born as your friend, and you should not think otherwise of me.”\*

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\* The colloquy quoted above is taken from the Vishnu Purana. Harivansa also says that Krishna earnestly asked the Gopas not to consider him as anything else but one of them. He never gave himself out that he was any higher being than man. In the Mahavarata, Udyaga Parva, he says,—“I have no claim to the miraculous or supernatural. I can but do what is possible in a man.”





## CHAPTER XII

## THE GREAT DANCE

THE Autumn's beautiful moon had lighted up all the blossoming trees and plants of the charming *Vrindavana*. The ever pretty *Jamuna* in silvery ripples slowly rolled on; delicious breezes blew over her waves scattering the sweetest fragrance; the sweet notes of the pipes of the Gopa boys rose higher and higher till all appeared to be in a sea of blissful cadence. Nature's every beauty and sweetness had gathered round on the green grassy lawns of the ever beautiful land of the Gopas and the Gopinis.\* All the boys and girls had assembled to join in a great dance,† which their

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\* Gopini means a female Gopa.

† The greatest poets and devotees of India have with great care described Srikrishna's this great dance called the *Rasa*. Therefore, *Vrindavana* and *Vrindavana's* Krishna and his maiden companions and their love, sports and dance, have taken a deep hold on the mind of the people of India. India's poetry, painting, music,—nay religion, all breathe this love, sports and dance of the Gopa maidens with their heart's idol, the ever-loving Krishna of the *Vrindavana*. Thousands of books have been written on this love-affair, and according to



beloved friend and leader Krishna had organised to be held in that beautiful moon-lit night. It was not the first dance. Often did Krishna organise many such moon-lit *fetes* in which all the fair girls of the *Vrindavana* took the greatest pleasure in joining. They were as much mad after him as the boys. Each and every one of those innumerable pretty girls loved him with all the love that lay in their sweet, little innocent hearts. They were the personations of innocence and simplicity; they were but the creatures of the wilds and the forest; they were born in an age when the world had not been steeped in sin and sensuality. But they knew how to love, and they loved Krishna as only a woman's heart, never touched by the world's frivolity, could possibly do.

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the taste, feelings and capacity of the different poets, it has been variously described. In the Vishnu Purana, it is simply the pure love of the innocent and simple girls of the forest for an exceedingly handsome, accomplished and heroic boy. It is simply a great dance,—a great "Ball,"—which still exists among the nations of Europe. In Harivansa it is a maddening love of youthful maidens for a young man. In the Vagavata it is the deep sensual love of passionate and sprightly girls for a passionate youth. In the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana, it is gross carnality. Thus the merry dancing and playful sports of innocent, simple and loving boys and girls have in the course of time been turned into the grossest sensuality.



His biographer\* says :—"Seeing the clear sky, the autumnal moon, the air perfumed with the fragrance of the lilies, and the wood maddened with the hummings of the bees, Krishna desired to sport with the cow-herd girls. With Rama he began to sing in sweet, low strains and in those beautiful measures that women loved. As soon as they heard his song, they left their homes and hastened to meet him. A maiden gaily sang in accompaniment to his song ; another listened to his music with all attention ; one called him by name, but then shrank in bashfulness ; but another, bolder and more loving, pressed to his side."

His biographer then goes on ;—"Going among them, Krishna conciliated some with gentle looks and some with shaking their hands. As each attempted to remain close to his side, the circle of the dance could not be formed. Therefore he took each by the hand, and when their eye-lids were closed by the effects of his touch, he formed the circle. They then began to dance in accompaniment to the songs in which they celebrated in the sweetest melody the beauty of the autumnal season. Krishna sang the song of the moon and her gentle rays, —the maidens, however, often chanted his

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\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XIII., Slokas 14-19.





praise. When leading, they followed him ; when coming back, they met him ; whether he went forward or backward, they always followed his foot-steps.”\*

In these dances often did Krishna slip away from his play-mates and maiden companions. Missing him, the girls wildly roved about, seeking him from grove to grove. They exclaimed to one another, “Look, here are the impressions of Krishna’s feet ! Some fortunate girl must have gone with him intoxicated in his love ; her irregular foot-marks show it. Here did Krishna gather flowers for her from the high boughs of trees, for we find here only the marks of the tips of his toes. Because she felt vanity for his thus adoring her with flowers, Krishna must have left her here and gone away by this way ; for behold, unable to follow his foot-steps as quickly as he went, she has tripped along upon her toes ! Being disappointed, she has returned by this way with faltering steps,—her foot-marks indicate it.”

Thus did he play and sport with the girls on the green grassy lawns and the beautiful shady groves of *Vrindavana*. Thus did he impart to the simple life of the forest girls a new happiness and joy, a new enjoyment

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\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XII., Slokas 46-56.



## THE GREAT DANCE

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and pleasure, a divine love in which the world's existence things they never tended the king. At night he held these sports in which the girls and the maidens of the Gopa settlement took the most prominent part. He loved them all; his love flowed like the eternal Spring of Time. It was the grand manifestation of that love which is superhuman, celestial, nay divine.†

\* We have been obliged to reject the elaborate and poetical description of the Vagavata. Its description of this affair is quite an independent poem and therefore, there is hardly anything historically reliable in it. It is, however, a most beautiful "Poem" in its own way. It is perhaps one of the grandest paintings of devotional love,—the love of the human soul for the Supreme One. Vishnu Purana and Harivansa have described these sports only in a few lines, but the Vagavata describes it in no less than five chapters.

Two new incidents have been introduced by the Vagavata. They are, (1) Krishna's removing the clothes of the maidens when they were bathing, and (2) some Brahmuna women's coming to Krishna to pay their adoration to him. Both are evidently Vagavata's own creation.

† We believe we are bound to state our reasons for saying that Krishna's love and dance were nothing but the innocent sports of merry boys and girls. It is so widely known as an affair of carnal love,—specially when some of the Puranas have described it as such,—that it would be impossible for us to convince all of our readers in a foot-note that it could not



When leading, they in a fervour  
when coming back, they met -existence. It  
be went forward or backward.

have been anything else but the simple sports of boys and girls. We shall, however, state some of our reasons, and we hope our readers will be at one with us when they will take them into their consideration.

(a) In the first place, our readers will find that Krishna was mere a boy when he left the Vrindavana for Mathura. It is admitted in all hands that he was only eleven years of age when these sports were held. We seriously ask our readers to say whether it is possible for a boy of eleven to entertain any idea of carnality.

(b) Secondly, when Krishna was most foully abused by Sisupala (Vide the Mahavarata, Sava Parva,) he was never charged by him with sensuality. If he really did what some of the Purana wanted us to believe, he would not have been spared by Sisupala. Now here in the Mahavarata, which is a much earlier work than any of the Puranas, we find that he is described as a man of lewd character. The next earlier work, Vishnu-Purana, says nothing of it.

(c) Thirdly, in every work in which his career has been described, —even in those works that delight in painting him as a god of carna love,—we find he has been called a *Jitendriya*, a man having his desires and passions subdued. See Vagavata, Skanda X, Chap. 33rd, Slokas 26 and 30, and also the Upanishad Gopala Tapini.

(d) Fourthly, such dances were very popular amongst the Aryans at the age in which Krishna was born. There was nothing wrong in these amusements, and none was charged





was that grand divine love in which sensuality had no place,—in which the world's existence

with carnality who joined in them. We find in the Mahavarata that the Kuru princes and princesses often held such dances. Even in Dwarka, Krishna and Rama had many such "balls," in which brothers and sisters, daughters and fathers, husbands and wives joined. See Harivansa, Chapter 146th, Slokas 16-18.

(e) Fifthly, *Rasha* means simply a "dance." Sridhara Swami, the great commentator of the Vagavata, thus explains the word. "It is a circular dance of men and women by holding one another's hands." In the Harivansa, the word *Rasha* is not used, but in its place the word *Hallisha* has been used. Now some of the great Sanskrit Lexicographers explain it thus. "It is the circular dance of women." We thus find no carnality was ever implied by a *Rasha* dance.

(f) Sixthly, in describing this affair, the Puranas have used the words *Ramayanti* and *Ratipriya*. These two words are now popularly believed to carry the sense of carnality, but we humbly suggest that they were never used in the Puranas in this sense in connection with the *Rasha* dance. The roots, *Rama* and *Rati*, both mean to sport. In this sense they are used in various Sanskrit works. See Harivansa, Chapter 67th, Slokas 24—26, and Markandeya Purana, Chapter 20th, Sloka 7. In the 67th Chapter of the Harivansa, the sports of the boys are described, and in these descriptions the words *Ramayanti* and *Ratipriya* often occur. We need not say in respect of the sports of the boys these two words convey no sense of carnality. If they mean



disappeared in a deep unfathomable ocean of blissful oblivion.\*

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simple sports in one place, why should they be given a different import in another place ?

It might be asked why the Puranas and such great works as Joydeva's *Gita Govinda* thought it proper to describe Krishna as a god of carnal love. It would be presumptuous on our part to guess their intention, but we believe their object was to give the masses an idea of the grand divine love that a human soul feels for the great Supreme One by citing man's carnal love as an instance,—a love which is the strongest in the world among all men in general.

\* We cannot conclude this chapter without mentioning Radha, the Gopa maiden, whose images are invariably to be seen by the side of Krishna all over India. At the present day the life of Krishna is indissolubly mixed up with that of Radha, who is said to be the wife of Ayana, his maternal uncle. But she is but a poetical creation. She is not to be found in the Mahavarata, or in Vishnu Purana, or Harivansa, or Vagavata. Perhaps she is the creation of the author of the original Brahma-Vaivarta Purana which is now lost. It is possible that the author of this Purana picked up one of the many Gopa maidens who sported with Krishna in the Vrindavana, and giving her a name, he painted her in the highest flight of poesy. Since then innumerable poets have used their great powers to develop the character of Radha. Her love for Krishna has been painted as the highest development of devotional love of the human soul for the Supreme One. Radha is now the grandest picture of *Devotion*. But we



## CHAPTER XIII

## DEPARTURE FOR MATHURA

It was impossible that the existence of Krishna in the Vrindavana could long remain unknown to the king Kansa in Mathura. Krishna's extra-ordinary exploits, his wide-spread popularity, his great fame soon reached his ears. He was told\* that Krishna was none other than the very boy, Devaki's eighth son, whom he had made such strenuous efforts to destroy.

He foamed and roared in anger ; but he could do nothing now ; Krishna was beyond

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must say that falling into the hands of poetasters, she has been often made to appear as a picture of sensuality.

In our opinion no particular Gopa maiden should be given a high status than any of the others. Each and every one of them loved Krishna with her whole heart, and none surpassed the others in fervour. We believe the poet who created Radha had no such intention, for the real meaning of the word "*Radha*" is *an adorer*, for the root *Radha* which means *to adore*. Every Gopa girl was, therefore, a "*Radha*," — an "*adorer*" of Krishna.

\* Vishnu Purana, Part, V., Sec. XV., relates that it was





his reach. He was the idol of the mighty Gopas who were ready to lay down their lives for him ; he was the leader of hundreds of brave boys who had flocked to him from all parts of the country,—boys that had been formed into a rude but a mighty army. He was now highly respected and greatly feared by the Nagas, who, at a signal from him, would hasten to his help.\*

Kansa was fully aware of all this. He knew also that almost all his people believed Krishna to be their ordained saviour ; he knew the entire Yadu race would secretly,—and if necessary openly,—stand by him if occasion would arise. Under the circumstances an open attempt to kill Krishna would give rise to a serious rebellion in his kingdom. An united uprising of the Yadus, the Gopas and the Nagas would bring about his downfall and death. He, therefore, thought of encompassing Krishna's death by a stratagem.

He sent for one of the most powerful Yadu chiefs, named Akrura,† and thus addressed

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Narada who informed Kansa that Krishna was the eighth child of Devaki.

\* See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 84th.

† Akrura was a great warrior amongst the Yadavas. In the Mahavarata and in all the other Puranas we find him a



## DEPARTURE FOR MATHURA

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him, "O Akrura, you are my friend ; do me a friendly service. There is no such warm friend and well-wisher of mine amongst the Yadus and the Bhojas as you. Go to the settlement of Nanda where do the two sons of Vasudeva live. Bring them here without delay on this chariot. On their arrival, I shall cause them to be destroyed by elephants. If they escape, I shall have them put to death by powerful athletes. With their death, it would be easy to kill Vasudeva and all the other Vrisnis, Bhojas and Dasarahs. I shall also destroy my avaricious father Ugrasena, his brother Devaka and all others who are rebellious against me. Get them here by telling them that there will be held a grand tournament in which they should come and display their prowess."\*

But Kansa was disappointed even in Akrura. He too went over to the enemy's side.†

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great friend of Krishna. He seemed to be of the same age as Krishna.

\* Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 36, Slokas 21-35.

† In the Sava Parva, Chapter XIV., Sloka 30, of the Mahavarata Krishna said to Yudhisthira, "Having bestowed the daughter of Ahuka on Akrura, I with Valadeva killed Kansa and Sumalin (or Sunama) for the good of our relation." We need not say this Ahuka was not the father of the old king of Mathura, Ugrasena. He was like Akrura a great Yadu warrior and a friend of Krishna.





He apprised the Vrindis of Kansa's intention, and when he arrived at the *Vrindavana*, he told the Gopas all about the nefarious conspiracy that had been made by Kansa to encompass the death of Krishna. A counter-plot was soon formed, not only to save the life of Krishna, but to make a final attempt to bring about the downfall of the cruel tyrant.

The cup of bitterness was full. They solemnly resolved that they would stand by Krishna and overthrow their persecutor, or die in the attempt. Krishna again and again assured them that he would kill Kansa and save them from his cruel persecutions.\*

A secret communication passed from house to house. It reached the Gopas in the distant *Vrindavana*: it penetrated into the deepest forest and reached the Nagas in their wild settlements. All were asked to be on the alert,

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\* In Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XVIII., Krishna thus addressed Akrura, "I shall devise proper measures for this. Depend upon it that Kansa had been already killed. Rama and I will go to Mathura to-morrow. The Gopas will accompany us, carrying sufficient presents for the king."

In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 41st, Krishna said,—"O Akrura, I will go with my brother to your house, and by destroying the scourge of the Yadu race, I will promote the welfare of my relatives."





and to make a final stand to overthrow the great tyrant.

With Akrura, the two Vrismi princes started for Mathura. The Gopas in a large contingent accompanied them apparently to witness the tournament and to pay their annual tribute, but in reality to aid Krishna, should occasion arise. They were a strong body, and were not incapable of holding their own against the Aryans of Mathura.

Krishna and the Gopas encamped for the night outside the city. Some of them headed by Krishna and Rama entered Mathura after dusk. They had an affray with some of Kansa's men in the streets, but they proceeded on till they reached the king's arsenal. There they had another brush with the royal guards. They then retired to their camp where too they had a slight encounter with the king's soldiers who had pursued them.\*

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\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, and Vagavata all relate that Krishna and Valarama met with Kansa's washerman in the streets of Mathura and they asked him in jest to give them some of the royal robes. The washerman abused them in return, in consequence of which a struggle ensued in which he was killed by Krishna. They then came across a hunch-backed girl, named Trivakra, who used to prepare perfumes for the king. They laughingly asked her to give them some



Thus passed the night. But Kansa over-looked all this with apparent graciousness. He was firmly convinced that Krishna would fall into the trap that had been laid by him for his destruction. He, therefore, anxiously and eagerly waited for the morrow.\*

of the royal perfumes which she gladly offered them. Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XX., says :—"Then Krishna, skilled in the healing art, took hold of her under the chin with his thumb and two fingers and lifted up her head, whilst with his feet he pressed down hers, and in this way he made her straight in stature, which made her appear handsome. Filled with love and admiration, she took Krishna by the garment and said, 'Do come to my house.' Krishna smiled and said, 'I shall come to your house some other time.' After dismissing her, he turned towards Rama and laughed aloud."

Out of this incident the Vagavata has built up a love story. But we must draw our readers' attention to the fact that Krishna was also a master in the healing art as he was in every thing else. Many instances of his cures will be found later on.

Krishna and the Gopa boys then proceeded on, and meeting a flower-seller, they asked him for some flowers which were gladly given to them. They then went to the royal arsenal where they had a struggle with the guards. See Vishnu Purana, Part V., Sec. XX., Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 82, and Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 42.

\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, and Vagavata relate that on his way to Mathura with Krishna and Rama, Akru





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## CHAPTER XIV

## THE DEATH OF KANSA

THE morning dawned. The trumpets were sounded, the heralds shouted, and the bards sang. Thousands of men, women and children winded their way towards the arena in which the great tournament\* would be held. It

stopped the chariot and went to bathe in the *Jamuna*. He saw the majestic figure of Krishna beneath its water. From this the commentators of the *Vagavata* and the other writers the Vaisnava sect say that the *perfect* incarnation of God did not take his birth in the womb of Devaki. When Vasudeva took Krishna, who was but a *partial* incarnation, to Nanda's house, he slipped from his hands and fell into the water of the *Jamuna*. Vasudeva immediately took him up again, but in fact Krishna remained there, and God (Vishnu) in Krishna's form came up to Vasudeva's lap. Since then Devaki's son lived in the water till the day when Akrura returned to the banks of the *Jamuna* with Vrindavana's Krishna who was the real and the perfect incarnation of God. They say Vishnu did not leave Gokula. Krishna, who was in the water and who was born in Devaki's womb, ascended the chariot and went to Mathura. Our readers may take this version for what it is worth.

\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata give almost a similar account of the death of Kansa. But much of their





was a brilliant spectacle, and all Mathura was present.

The citizens assembled on the platforms set apart for them. The princes with the ministers and the courtiers occupied the royal seats. The judges of the game were seated in front of the king who sat apart, close by, on a lofty throne. Separate platforms had been constructed for the ladies of the palace where they sat, and the other women took their seats on the other platforms. Accommodation was allowed to Nanda and the Gopas in a separate platform at the end of which sat Akrura and Vasudeva. Every one was on the tip-toe of expectation for the appearance of Krishna and Rama.\*

But the king had ordered his men to set upon Krishna an infuriated elephant† when he with his brother would make an attempt to enter the arena. An elephant was accordingly driven against them, but the two brothers, after a hard fight, killed the huge animal and entered the arena.

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description is obviously fictitious. We have accepted only those portions of their accounts which appeared to be reliable.

\* This tournament was called *Dhanurmuha*,—literally a trial of archery.

† Visnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XX.



As soon as they made their appearance the bugles were sounded, and Chanura and Mustika sprang forth defiantly slapping their arms. Covered with the blood of the elephant, Rama and Krishna majestically stepped forward like two proud young lions. Exclamations of surprise and pity rose all over the place. People cried aloud. "Alas ! Alas !" Many exclaimed, "Are there no elders present here who will judge aright ? Two delicate boys on one side, and two athletic fiends on the other !—Is this fair and just ? It is a great sin for the umpires and the judges of the game to allow a contest between boys and strong men."

Coolly and calmly did Krishna step into the arena. He engaged with the highly powerful Chanura, and Valarama began to fight with the well-skilled wrestler, Mustika. Entwining and pushing and pulling and beating one another with fists, arms and elbows, they fought with one another till at last Chanura began gradually to lose his strength. At the sight of Krishna's gaining ground, Kansa roared in anger and ordered all music to stop.

After wrestling with Chanura for a long time, Krishna at last lifted him up and whirled him over his head. He whirled his





adversary round and round, till he became out of breath and died. He then dashed him on the ground like a piece of clay.

In the meanwhile Valarama had killed Mustika, and the other athletes had fled in fear. The two victorious boys then danced in the arena, dragging along with them the Gopa boys. Kansa became maddened with anger; fire flashed from his eyes; he roared aloud to his men, "Drive those two cow-herd boys from the arena. Seize the villain Nanda, and secure him with chains of iron. Put Vasudeva to death with tortures intolerable to his years. Seize the cattle and all that belongs to these cow-herds.

But not a soul stirred; the order of the great king was for the first time disobeyed. He stared in anger and in fury, nay in fear at his people, but all stood still as statues.

Krishna sprang up to the place where Kansa was seated. He seized him by the hair of his head, hurled his crown to the ground, felled him down and threw himself upon him. After a hard struggle, he killed the great tyrant, and then dragged him into the centre of the arena.

Not a single soul amongst the many thousands that were present in the arena rose to the succour of their great king. All sat





motionless on their seats. Only Sumalin, his younger brother, came to his rescue,\* but he was soon despatched by Valarama.

A deep and solemn silence reigned among the multitude, till at last the Gopa boys filled the sky with their loud cheers. They stood up in a body and sent up such a tremendous shout that in the distant *Vrindavana* the Gopa women started up and laid aside their household works. The people of Mathura outside the arena ran from all directions towards the palace to ascertain what the matter was.†

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\* The Vagavata says that eight or nine of his brothers came to his help, and they were all killed by Valarama.

† This is the account that Krishna himself gives of the death of Kansa in the Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chap. XIV., Slokas 30-34.

"The foolish Kansa, having persecuted the Yadavas, married two of the daughters of Jarasandha. They were named Astind Prapti. Strengthened by this alliance, he full persecuted his relatives and gained an ascendancy over them all. By his cruel acts he earned a very bad name. The wicked wretch persecuted the old chiefs of the Bhoja race. These chiefs sought our protection from the persecutions of their relative Kansa. Having bestowed upon Akura the beautiful daughter of Ahuka, named Satarnika, I did a service to my relatives. I killed both Kansa and Sumalin with the assistance of Rama."



## CHAPTER XV

## KRISHNA AS A PRINCE

WHEN the Gopas were again and again cheering Krishna for the great deed he had done, instead of feeling joy and delight, he felt the greatest possible pain. The heart-rending lamentations of Kansa's mother and wives, of his children and relatives, nay of his old father Ugrasena, made his heart bleed. One of his biographers says :—"Krishna expressed his regret for what had happened, and with eyes saturated with tears, he consoled them."\* Another says :—"Surrounded by the Yadus, Krishna expressed his regret for killing Kansa. Moved by the loud wailings of Kansa's wives, he wept."†

When the great tempest that had been raised had a little abated, and the excitement of the people had cooled down, and the great commotion for the sudden death of Kansa had subsided, Krishna then took upon

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\* Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXI.

† Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 87th.





himself the task of settling the affairs of the Yadus that had become unsettled by the sudden death of their king. He ordered a royal funeral\* for Kansa and his brother ;

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\* To give our readers some idea of the nature, of the ceremony of a royal funeral of that age, we quote below the Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter CXXVII., Slokas 5-23, in which the funeral of Pandu, the Kuru prince, has been described. "The priests went out of the city carrying the fragrant and blazing sacred fire, fed with *Ghee*. Friends, relatives, and adherents, wrapping up the corpse with cloth, decked it with flowers and sprinkled over it various perfumes. They adorned the bier with garlands and rich hangings. Then placing the body of the king on that excellent bier, they caused it to be carried on the shoulders of men. With the white umbrella held over the bier, with waving *Chamaras*, with the sounds of various musical instruments, the whole scene looked bright and grand. Many hundreds of men distributed gems among the crowd. The priests, clad in white walked in front of the procession, pouring libations of *Ghee* on the sacred fire which blazed in an ornamental vessel. They at last came to a charming and sacred wood on the bank of the Ganges. There did they lay down the bier. They then besmeared the body with all kinds of perfumes. They brought water in many golden vessels and washed the body. They then again smeared it with white sandal-paste, and with *Kala-agaru* mixed with *Tungarasha* (a kind of perfume). Having dressed the body in a white robe, they placed the king on the funeral pyre. They then set fire to it and





he did every thing possible to mitigate the sorrow and the grief of Kansa's family.

He then went to his father and mother and made obeisance to them. He made every effort to make every one happy; he sent messengers to the Vrisnis, Dasarahs, Yadus, Vojas and others who had left Mathura through the persecutions of Kansa.\* He then made the necessary arrangements to place the venerable Yadu chief, Ugrasena, the deposed father of Kansa, on the throne of Mathura.† But the

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burnt the body with the fragrant *Sandal* wood which was besmeared with *Tungpada* and other perfumes."

\* Only the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 48th, says that Krishna sent Akrura to enquire after the welfare of the sons of his paternal aunt Pritha (Kunti), who were the illustrious Pandavas.

† We need not say that at the time of which we speak, it was the practice with the destroyer of a king to ascend the throne of his victim. In the annals of ancient India we find none who did not avail himself of this privilege except Krishna. For a cow-head boy to withstand the great temptation of becoming a king and to refuse the supplications of the whole Yadu race bespoke a strong will. Our readers must remember that Krishna was only twelve years of age when he killed Kansa. The Bhagavata distinctly says,—this assertion, is borne out by all its great commentators,—that Krishna killed Kansa on the 14th Lunar day of the month of Falguna (about 1st week of March) when he was in his twelfth year.



old chief declined the offer and earnestly asked Krishna to occupy the throne rendered vacant by the death of Kansa. The entire Yadu race entreated him to accede to the request of the old king. But Krishna said, "Neither have I any necessity for a kingdom, nor do I desire a throne. I have not killed Kansa with the motive of becoming a king. For the good of the world, your son, who became the scourge of the race, has been killed by me. I shall again be a dweller of the forest and rove happily amongst the cow-herds and the kine. O king, I again and again say, I have neither any need of a kingdom, nor any desire for it."\* He listened to no refusal, and the old king was duly installed by him on the ancient throne of the Vrisni race.† Krishna then left the city to the great regret of all the people.

But he did not return to his old favourite forest of the *Vrindavana*; he did not go back amongst the loving boys and girls of Vraja, nor to his beloved mother Jasoda and his ever fond

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\* Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 88th.

† The original kings of Mathura were the Vrisnis, who were precluded by a curse from ascending the throne. It went over to the female side, and their sister's sons were made kings. Thus Ugrasena and his family came to rule over the Yadu race.





father Nanda. Bowing down his head to the Gopa chief and all the other revered elders, and providing them with much wealth and many presents, he took leave of them. He implored their blessings, and asked them to go back to their settlement. He then turned toward his play-mates who stood with tears in their eyes. He embraced them all and asked them to return to the beautiful *Vindavana*. "If you love me", said he, "go back to our happy woods. Make my mother Jasoda forget my absence. Play and sport with the girls as I used to do. Let them not feel that I am away. Tell them I am still to them as I were before, but duty calls me elsewhere."

He left Mathura and went far and far away to distant Kasi,\* there to begin his education. He and his brother Rama attached themselves to the household of the venerable preceptor named Sandipani† who lived at a place called

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\* Modern Benares.

† All the Puranas say that Krishna was under the tuition of Sandipani only for sixty-four days. It is said that within this short time he mastered all the Sciences. They also narrate a story in which Krishna is said to have rescued Sandipani's son from a sea-demon, named Panchanjanya. Krishna obtained a conch from this demon which afterwards became his great war-conch.





Avantipur.\* They then began to study both the Vedas and the Science of Arms.

\* This is not all the education that Krishna received. All through the Mahavarata, not to speak of the later Puranas, we find him described as one of the most learned men of his age. In the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter 38th, Sloka 19, Bhishma says,—“He is vastly learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas.” In Chhandogya-Upanishad,—a very ancient work (see Introduction)—we meet with this passage : “Ghora (Rishi) of the family of Angirasha, saying all this to Devaki’s son. Krishna, added, ‘In the end remember these three things.’ This evidently shows that Krishna studied under the Rishi Ghora. In the Mahavarata we find that he performed *Tapasya* for ten years on the Himalayas. In those days *Tapasya* did not mean practising austerities. It meant study and meditation. See Satapata Brahmana, Valli 2, Anuvaka 6.



## CHAPTER XVI

## THE WAR WITH JARASANDHA

KRISHNA and Rama could not continue their study long ; they were soon sent for by their relatives, because a great danger threatened the city of the Vrisnis. The great and mighty Jarasandha, the father-in-law of Kansa, had marched against Mathura with a large army. In this great crisis, the Yadus and the Vrisnis had none to save them except their ever-ordained saviour Krishna.

Jarasandha was then the paramount lord of Northern India.\* It is said that he commanded twenty *akshauhini*† of soldiers,—a stupen-

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\* From the earliest to the recent days it is found that one or the other sovereign of India became the paramount lord over the others. In later days, such Emperors were Chandra Gupta, Vikramaditya, Asoka and others.

† One chariot, one elephant, five foot-soldiers and three horse-men form a *Patti*. Three *pattis* make a *Senamukha*; three *Senamukhas* make a *Gulma*; three *Gulmas* make a *Gana*; three *Ganas* make a *Bahini*; three *Bahinis* make a *Pritana*; three *Pritanas* make a *Chamu*; three *Chamus* make an *Anikini*; ten *Anikinis* make one *Akshauhini*. Thus one *Akshauhini* would consist of 21870 chariots, 21870 elephants,



## THE WAR WITH JARASANDHA

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ious army.\* All the chiefs and potentates, all the kings and princes, acknowledged his sovereignty,† either by paying him tribute or by obeying his commands; or by assisting him with soldiers in time of war. He was a powerful sovereign and ruled with an iron hand.‡

109350 foot-soldiers and 65610 horse-men. It is said that Jarasandha commanded twenty times this number.

\* Sisupala, the king of Chedi, was the Generalissimo of this great army.

† Krishna thus spoke to Yudhisthira in the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas 8-22.

"Having overcome the entire Kshatriya order, Jarasandha has put himself up over the head of all the kings. The powerful Sisupala has become his Commander-in-Chief. Bakra, the powerful king of the Kurushas, also waits upon him as his disciple. The king of the Yavanas, who has chastised Mura and Naraka, who is the most powerful king of the West, who is named Bhagadatta, has also bowed to Jarasandha in submission. The powerful king of Banga, Paundra and Kirata, who is known by the name of Paundraka, also waits upon him. That mighty king of the Bhojas, Bhismaka, who is our relative and who rules over the fourth part of the world, has become a servitor of the king of Magadha.

‡ The Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Sloka 63, says :—"Many kings have been kept prisoners in Girivraja (his city) to be offered by Jarasandha as sacrifices in a great Yajna."





Learning that his favourite son-in-law\* had been murdered by Krishna supported by all the Vrisnis, Jarasandha's anger knew no bounds. Without the least delay he started with a large army, vowing complete destruction of Mathura and the total annihilation of the entire Yadu race. But Mathura was long way off from Magadha, and therefore the irascible monarch, heavily encumbered as he was in his march with a large army, took many months to arrive at the Vrisni capital.

In the meanwhile Krishna had returned from Avantipur, and with the small army that the Vrisnis commanded, he had made every preparation to defend the city. For days together the great Magadha king lay encamped round the city, besieging its citadel, but Krishna's supreme generalship and judicious manœuvre of his little army saved the city from falling into the hands of the enemy. Worn out and disgusted, the great king at last raised the siege and returned to his own country.†

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\* Kansa married the two daughters of Jarasandha, named Prapti and Asti.

† In ancient India real generalship was unknown. Every warrior was pre-eminent for his own bravery, physical strength and the knowledge of arms. They knew not how to face a



It would be better if we quote Krishna's own words. He thus describes his war with Jarasandha.\*

"Jarasandha took up arms against us. We, eighteen branches of the Yadava race, consulted together and came to the conclusion that if we continued to strike our enemy for one hundred years, we should not be able to do him least harm. He had two friends; they were as powerful as the foremost of all powerful men. They were named Hansa and Dimvaka. But there was also another very great king named Hansa who was killed by Rama in a battle which raged for eighteen days. On hearing the rumoured death of Hansa, Dimvak thought that he could not live without him and therefore he went to the *Jamuna* and drowned himself. When Hansa heard what Dimvaka had done, he also put an end to his life by similar means. On hearing the death of the two great pillars of his empire, Jarasandha raised the siege

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great warrior or a great army with a small force. Our readers will find that it was Krishna who introduced in India real generalship in his war with great Jarasandha. He was a great general as well as a great warrior.

\* Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas 35-45.



of Mathura and went back to Magadha in great sorrow.

But the Vrishnis and the Yadus were not allowed any respite. They learnt that Jarasandha had fitted up another great expedition against them. He had invited the great Yavana\* king to aid him in the

\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Vagavata says that Jarasandha invaded Mathura eighteen times and was on every occasion defeated. They relate that in his last invasion he invited the great Yavana (supposed to be Greek) king named Kala Yavana, to come to his aid. This king besieged Mathura with a very large army; but Krishna separated him by a stratagem from his troops and led him alone into a cave where, it is said, a great Rishi, named Machhakunda, was asleep. Kala Yavana in the darkness took him to be Krishna and gave him a kick. The Rishi awoke, fire flashed from his eyes in anger, and the Yavana king was reduced to ashes. The description of the war is very elaborated both in the Vishnu Purana and Harivansa. The Vagavata says that when Krishna and Rama were returning after encompassing the death of Kala Yavana, they were attacked on the way by Jarasandha. They both fled and took shelter on the Pravarasana hill to which Jarasandha set fire. The two brothers leaped from the hill and escaped to Dwarka. Harivansa calls the hill by the name of Gomata.

As there is hardly any historical value of these accounts of the Puranas, we have rejected them. The account of the war given in the Mahabharata as quoted above appears to be based on facts.





destruction of Mathura and in the annihilation of the Yadu race. They were filled with great alarm ; and they knew not what to do. They were but a few in number ; if they fought with Jarasandha for one hundred years, they would hardly be able to weaken his power, whereas their number would daily decrease till they would be totally annihilated. Krishna was very averse to bloodshed :—on the present occasion it would be useless and unwise. He, therefore, advised the Yadus to leave Mathura and take shelter in a place where they would be out of the reach of Jarasandha and where they would be able to live in peace and security. We again quote his own words :—

“We became exceedingly discouraged and prepared to fly. We divided our great wealth into small portions to make it portable. We then fled through fear of Jarasandha with our sons, cousins and relatives. We fled towards the west. There was a charming city named Kushasthali\* adorned by the Raivataka moun-

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\* Kushasthali was in Guzerat. The new city Daravati or Dwarka was founded by Krishna on a small island in the sea, protected by a hill called Raivataka on the main-land. Perhaps no place could have been more impregnable. It was also exceedingly charming in point of natural beauty. Being surrounded on all sides by the sea, its climate was very



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tain. In this city we took up our abode. We repaired its fort and made it so impregnable that even women could defend it. Though quite capable of protecting ourselves, yet we have taken shelter in the Gomata mountain. Twentyone posts of armed men are placed there, and the heroes of the eighteen branches of the Yadu race always defend it.”\*

Thus did Krishna bring the great Yadu clan many hundred miles away from their forefather's land. He brought them across deserts, mountains, rivers and streamlets to the coast of the sea. He founded for them a new city which was, as he himself said, “impregnable even to the celestials.” He built a chain of forts on the Raivataka mountain to protect the city from all external attacks. He introduced amongst them a system of government far superior to what

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salubrious. It lay also very close to the place of the greatest pilgrimage of that age, named *Provata*.

Dwarka is even to-day, like Mathura and Vrindavana, a great Hindu shrine, though nothing of the ancient city is now in existence; only the steeple of a temple is visible in the midst of the sea. It is mentioned in the Puranas that after Krishna's death the city was engulfed in the sea.

\* See Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XIV., Slokas



then existed in any part of India. He formed an army of his old playmates, his beloved cowherd boys of the Vrindavana, who became afterwards the foremost warriors in India and were famous in the name of *Sansaptakas*.\* Thus did he raise the Yadu race to a higher strata of civilisation than that of any other Aryan race then living on the plains of India.†

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\* See Mahavarata, Drona Parva, the battle between Arjuna and the Sansaptakas.

† See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 114th.



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## CHAPTER XVII

## KRISHNA IN DWARKA

AFTER settling in Dwarka,\* Krishna married the Princess of Vidharva,† named Rukmini, whom he loved and who loved him.‡ But his marriage was not celebrated in peace. The powerful king of Vidharva, Bhismaka, refused to bestow his daughter on the Vrisni prince, and under the advice or dictates of the great Jarasandha, he made arrangements to marry Rukmini to the king of Chedi, Sisupala,§ who was the generalissimo of Jarasandha's great army.

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\* It is a pity that the authors of the Puranas have not described Krishna's career in Dwarka as fully as they have done his career in the Vrindavana. They have no doubt related innumerable matters, but they are so obviously fictitious that it would be useless to discuss them. We shall, therefore, give in this chapter the little that we have been able to gather from this great mass of fictions.

† Modern Berar.

‡ The Vagavata says Rukmini sent a messenger to Krishna. Bhismaka was a Bhoja, and therefore a kinsman of Krishna.

§ Sisupala was Krishna's cousin. He was the son of his aunt (father's sister).





But Krishna with the Vrishnis went to Vidharva, and when the princess was on her way back to the palace from a temple, he took her up on his chariot and drove away with all speed towards Dwarka.\* Bhismaka's wrathful

\* In the age of which we are speaking, the marriage of the royal princesses of the Aryan race used to take place only in two ways, namely (a) *Sayamvara* (self-choice), and (b) *Harana* (forcible taking away). In *Sayamvara* all the great princes were invited, and the maiden made her own choice from amongst them. But the bride's father often contrived something to test the heroism of the several princes present, and thus he gave away his daughter to the best man. An instance of this will be found later on in Draupadi's *Sayamvara*. But when a *Sayamvara* was not held, or when both the prince and the princess thought that they would not be able to secure the man or the woman after their heart, then a prince would carry away a princess by force,—force being used not against the maiden, but against those who would oppose him. It was considered by the Aryan princes of that age to be the best method of marriage, for in this case they had the opportunity to display their prowess. Sometimes princesses were carried away from the *Sayamvara* assemblies. The great Bhisma carried away from the *Sayamvara* assembly the two princesses of Kasi in order to get them married to his younger brothers. (See Mahavarata, Adi Parva.)

In case of *Harana*, the maidens were generally found to be in love with the heroes who carried them away. Rukmini was in love with Krishna. In fact it is only the modern run-



son, Rukmi, pursued him with a large army. After a hot chase he overtook him, and when Krishna found that the Vidharva prince had already come up with him, he stopped his chariot and gave him battle. After a severe fight Rukmi was defeated and his army utterly routed. Krishna then drove away to his own city, but the Vidharva prince remained on the field of battle,\* vowing never to return to his kingdom till he could wreak his vengeance upon Krishna.†

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away marriage. This sort of marriage was also recognised in the sacred books as being highly meritorious. The Rig-Veda, Mandala 10, Sukta 27, Rik II. says :—"Who is there who desires to possess the daughter of one whose daughter has no sight? Is there any who will throw the *meni* (a sort of weapon) against one who carries away such a maiden?"

\* It is said Rukmi found a city on this field of battle and named it Bhojakata.

† We believe we are bound to say something more about Krishna's marriages, Vishnu Purana, Part IV., Chapter XV., Sloka 85, says, "Krishna had sixteen thousand one hundred and one wives." Again in Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXVIII., we find that he had "sixteen thousand and seven wives." In the same work, Part IV., Chapter XV., it is mentioned that he had "one thousand four hundred and forty sons."

Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata, relate that eight were the chief wives of Krishna,—namely (I) Rukmini,



Notwithstanding Krishna's towering personality, his loving nature and sweet character, there was no unity, good will, or brotherhood

(2) Satyabhama, (3) Jamvavati, (4) Kalindi, (5) Mitravinda, (6) Satya, (7) Vadra and (8) Lakshana. But in this matter they say innumerable contradictory things. In the Vishnu Purana, Part V., Chapter XXVIII., we get nine chief wives of Krishna including Rukmini. In Chapter 32 of the same work, we meet with another list of the chief wives of Krishna in which some new additional names are found. In Part IV., Chapter XV., of the same work, we get another additional name. In Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chapter 15th, we get nine names in addition to Rukmini, but in Chapter 162nd of the same work, we meet with twelve names in addition to Rukmini. A few lines further down in the same chapter of the same work, we get five more additional names.

Except Rukmini and satyabhama none of these wives ever appear on the scene of action. Satyabhama appears only once or twice, but those places of the Puranas or the Mahavarata in which she appears are apparently interpolations. (See our notes later on). Again none of the sons of these wives, except those of Rukmini and Jamvavati, is to be met with in any period of Krishna's life. Jamvavati was a bear's daughter, and therefore it is impossible to believe that she gave birth to a human being. It is said this son, Samba, carried away to the daughter of Durjadhana named Lakshana. This story is mentioned only in the Puranas; no mention is made of it in the Mahavarata. If this story had any truth in it, it must have a place in the Mahavarata which is the history of Durjadhana and the Kurus. Rakmini's son





among the various clans of the Yadu race. Though they obeyed and followed Krishna, either through love or fear, they could not live in peace with one another. Their ancient feud was kept up, and they quarrelled on inspite of Krishna's presence and his continued effort to inspire love and amity among them. This is what he himself said, "I live as a slave of my relatives and hear their harsh words, though I gave them away half of my wealth. My heart ever bleeds at the cruel abuses of my kinsmen. Valadeva, Gada Sukumara and my son, Pradumna, have become famous in the world on account of their personal beauty. The Andhakas and the Vrisnis are highly powerful, energetic and heroic. Those whom they do not aid are sure to perish and those whom they aid are sure to acquire immense wealth. But inspite of these powerful men holding to my side, I am passing my time as one utterly helpless and destitute. Ahuka and Akrura are my warm friends, but if I express love towards one, the other sets angry, therefore do I express love towards neither. It is very difficult to

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pradumna, however, is present all through Krishna's career. It is his grandson, Vajra, who finally ascended the throne of the Vrisnis. Under the circumstances we shall not be very ~~sure~~ <sup>sure</sup> we doubt the very existence of any other wives of Krishna except Rukmini.



abandon Ahuka and Akrura for the great friendship that I bear for them."\*

The fowling story will give us a very clear idea of the internal condition of the Yadu race when they lived in Dwarka.†

A great quarrel broke out amongst the Yadus on account of a gem called *Samantaka*. One of their chiefs named Satrajita obtained it, but Krishna thought that it should be possessed only by the head of their clan, namely king Ugrasena. But he did not speak it out, nor did he ask for it, for he feared it would add fuel to the fire of the great feud that always raged among the Yadavas. Satrajita, however, was afraid of losing it, and therefore he presented it to his brother, Prasena, who was a great warrior, believing that he would be able to retain it in spite of Krishna's desire to take it away.

Once upon a time Prasena went out in a hunting excursion, but he never returned. He was killed by a lion in the deepest part of the forest, and as he wore the jewel at the time, it was lost with him. But suspicion fell on Krishna. Many believed that it was Krishna who had murdered Prasena and stolen the gem.

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\* The Mahavarata, Santi Parva.

† This story is given in the Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata.



## SRIKRISHNA

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To remove this great stigma, Krishna tried to find out where the jewel was. He went out alone into the forest, and after a diligent search, found the gem and returned with it to Dwarka. Calling a meeting of all his kinsmen, he handed the gem over to Satrajita in the presence of all.\*

\* Vishnu Purana, Harivansa and Bhagavata relate that on going to find out the gem, Krishna saw that it was with a bear, named Jamvavana. He fought with him and defeated him. Thereupon the bear gave him back the gem along with his daughter Jamvavati whom Krishna married. On his return to Dwarka, he gave the gem to Satrajita who, in order to propitiate him, bestowed upon him his beautiful daughter named Satyabhama.

We believe it would be better if we quote here a passage that relates the other marriages of Krishna. The Bhagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 58th, says:—"One day Krishna and Arjuna came to the banks of the *Jamuna* where they met with a most handsome damsel. On Arjuna's asking her, 'O beautiful maiden, who are you, whose daughter and whose wife?' She replied, 'I am the daughter of the exalted Sun. I live in a place underneath the waters of the *Jamuna*. I am practising hard austerities so that I might be the wife of Vishnu.'" On hearing her words, Krishna brought her to Indraprastha and married her with due ceremonies. Vinda and Anu-Vinda were the allies of Duryodhana. They had a beautiful sister named Mitravinda who offered the nuptial garland to Krishna, but her brothers refused to bestow her on





But the fatal jewel soon brought about Satrajita's death. One Satadhanya murdered him when he was asleep, and stole it. When Krishna heard of this most diabolical and cold-blooded murder, he, as the leader of the Yadus, was obliged to take serious notice of Satadhanya's conduct and to pass upon him the capital sentence. But Satadhanya, after having secretly handed over the gem to Akrura, fled from Dwarka on a fleet steed. Krishna and Rama pursued him, and after a hot chase when they came up with him, Satadhanya jumped down from his horse which fell dead through excessive exhaustion, and he then fled into the forest. Krishna got down from his chariot and ran after him. When Satadhanya saw that escape was impossible, he drew his sword. A fight ensued in which Satadhanya was killed. But when Krishna searched his person, he did not find the gem. On his return to the chariot, he told this to

him. Thereupon Krishna carried her away by force. The king of Kosala, Nagnajiat, had a very handsome daughter named Satya, but he declared that he would give his daughter to him only, who would be able to chastise the furious bulls that he possessed. Krishna went to Kosala beat the bulls, and married the maiden. After this, Krishna married his cousin, Vaira, the princess of Kakeya and then carried away Lakshana, the beautiful princess of Madra."



Valarama who did not believe it. He said with great scorn, "Fie to you! You are very avaricious. You have stolen the gem. I will never go back to Dwarka." Saying this, the wrathful Rama went away to Videha\* where he lived for three years.

In the meanwhile Akrura fled from Dwarka. Krishna on his return had not the slightest doubt that the jewel was with him. He therefore again and again asked him to come back, but Akrura did not. At last he was prevailed upon to come. On his arrival, Krishna convened a meeting of his kinsmen, and in the presence of all asked Akrura to admit that the jewel was with him. Finding that denial would be useless, Akrura handed the gem to Krishna. Many of the Yadu chiefs, including Rama, clamoured to have it, but Krishna turned a deaf ear to all their importunities and returned the gem to Akrura, saying that he was the fittest person among them all to wear it.

Thus did Krishna preserve internal peace in the Vrisni city and kingdom amongst men who were ever arrogant and proud, wild and vicious,—men who had grown excessively haughty on account of the very high

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\* Modern North Behar.



position that their kinsman Krishna held in all India, and for which they too received the highest homages from all,—men who finally exterminated themselves from their own internal dissensions.

But Krishna had also to contend against foreign foes. He had to defend his city more than once against external attacks.\* He had to go out many times to fight against tyrannical kings.† But as will be found later on,

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\* See Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, Chapter XLV.

† In the Mahavarata, Harivansa, Vishnu Purana and other Puranas there are many accounts of Krishna's various wars. But they are narratives, full of extraordinary descriptions ; and it would be mere waste of time to make an attempt to pick up from them any historical facts. We shall, therefore, simply mention them here.

(a) War with Naraka.

Naraka was supposed to be the son of Earth. He was a great demon, and he kept imprisoned in his harem sixteen thousand women who were all finally rescued by Krishna. It is said Krishna married them all.

(b) War with Salya.

This king had a city which is said to have floated in the sky. He fought with Krishna with the power of illusion, but was finally beheaded by him.

(c) War with Paundra king Vasudeva.

This king assumed the *role* of Krishna, *i.e.* he gave out that he was the real incarnation of Vishnu and that the Vrismi





he was ever averse to war and blood-shed. If a battle was to be fought in order to punish a tyrant or to protect the people from wrong or oppression, if it were a righteous battle, he was never slow to take up arms. And if he ever took up arms, he was never defeated; he was ever invincible and ever victorious.

But what sort of life did he himself lead? We shall quote one of his biographers.\* "One day Krishna thus spoke to his wife Rukmini, 'O princess, many highly powerful, mighty, wealthy and handsome monarchs sought your hand. The great Sisupala was present with the view of possessing you; your father and

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Prince was an impostor. Krishna invaded his kingdom, killed him, and burnt Kasi, (Benares) the king of which came to the aid of Vasudeva.

(d) War with king Bana.

This king refused to bestow his daughter on Krishna's grandson Anurudhya, in consequence of which Krishna attacked him and defeated him after a great battle. It is said Bana had one thousand arms.

In the Mahavarata, Sabha Parva, it is mentioned that he conquered the western countries and invaded the Pragjotisha.

Bhagavata and Harivansa relate many more battles and wars fought by Krishna.

\* Bhagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 60th, Slokas 10-20.



brother also wished to bestow you upon him. Why then abandoning such desirable matches, you wanted to marry a person like myself? I have taken shelter in the sea for the fear of other kings; I have quarrelled with the strong and abandoned all royal prerogatives. If women follow men whose conduct is not to be understood and who do not remain under female control, they are sure to meet with great misery. We are poor and the poor only love us. Friendship and marriage can take place among those whose lineage, wealth, prowess and beauty are similar. Friendship and marriage can never take place between the high and the low. You have little experience. Ignorant of what I now say, you married such a worthless man as I am. I am indifferent both to my home and to my body. I have no desire for wife, son, or riches. I am happy in my own self.”\*

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\* Here we take leave of Pauranic Krishna, i.e. Krishna as described by the Puranas. They have written many things more about Krishna, but as there is no historical value in these accounts, we have passed them over. Henceforth we shall place before our readers Krishna as described in the Mahavarata.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## KURU-PANCHALA

WHEN Krishna and the Yadavas firmly established themselves in Dwarka, a great event took place in Northern India. It was the *Sayamvara*\* of the Panchala princess, named Draupadi.

Kurujangala and Panchala† were two of the most important kingdoms in the Aryavarta.‡ The two kingdoms were contiguous to each other, and they were inhabited by two very powerful Aryan clans called the Kurus and the Panchalas. These two great clans rose from the same stock,§ and they originally

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\* See our note in P. 68.

† Kurujangala is modern Delhi and Panchala, modern Garhwal.

‡ We quote a Sloka from the *Manu Samhita*, Chapter II.

“The country bounded by the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhya on the south, by the eastern sea on the east and the western sea on the west is known to the learned by the name of Aryavarta.”

§ The compound word “Kuru-Panchala” is often met with in the Vedas.





lived together and called themselves by the same name. But for some reason or other, which it is now impossible to guess, they quarrelled amongst themselves, and separated. Some settled in Kurujangala and some in Panchala. But their feud was deep-rooted and their quarrel never ceased. Both clans went on fighting from generation to generation till at last they were almost annihilated in the great battle which they fought on the field of Kurukshetra.\*

At the time of which we speak, Dhritarashtra was the king of the Kurus, but he being blind, the administration rested on his uncle, Bhishma, who was the greatest warrior and statesman of that age. The throne should have been occupied by Bhishma, but he had long ago foregone his claims in favour of his younger brothers. His father Santanu fell in love with a fisherman's daughter named Satyawati,† but the fisherman

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\* See Aisika Parva, Mahāvarata, and Part II, this work.

† She had another name; it was Matsagandha. It is said that because the smell of fish emanated from her body, she bore this name. One day she was met by the great sage Parasara, and as she allowed him the embrace, she was relieved of the smell through the Rishi's grace. The fruit of embrace was the great sage Vyasa, who was named Krishna Dwaipayana, because he was born on an island.



refused to bestow his daughter on the king unless he would take a vow to make her son his successor. When Bhishma came to learn what had happened, he went to the fisherman and took a vow never to occupy the throne nor to marry, so that the throne might for ever be occupied by Satyawati's sons and their descendants.

Satyavati gave birth to two sons, but both of them died childless, leaving two young widows behind. King Santanu had long been dead; Bhishma by his vow was precluded from marrying; thus was the great Kuru dynasty on the point of becoming extinct. It therefore became necessary to have a child begotten of the widowed princesses. Under such exigencies the Aryans of that age had the custom of having children begotten on widows by the brothers of their husbands.\* Satyawati had a *Kanin* son.† He was the great sage Vyasa, the celebrated compiler of the Vedas and the great writer of the original

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\* It was a prevalent custom in that age. We quote the Rig-Veda, 10th Mandala, 40th Sukta, 2nd Rik.

“As widows attract their husband's younger brothers to their beds, or as women attract men, so who does attract you, (O Aswins) ?”

† A son born of a woman before her marriage was called a *Kanin* son. See Manu Sanhita, 9-17.



*Purana* and *Itihasa*.\* He was appealed to, and he begot successively three sons, two on the princesses and one on a hand-maid of theirs.† The eldest was Dhritarashtra, the next was Pandu and the youngest was Vidura.

Dhritarashtra married the princess of Gandhara† named Gandhari; Pandu married two wives, Prithaṣ and Madri. The elder prince being blind, the younger Pandu ascended the throne. Both brothers lived for some time in great amity, but it appeared they could not long pull on. Pandu left Kurujangala, and went away to the Himalayas with his wives and retainers. Thus another new clan branched off from the Kurus which afterwards came to be known by the name of the Pandavas. ||

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\* See Introduction.

† This was also a prevalent custom in that age. We quote Kaustaki Brahmana, II.

"You are the son of a hand-maid. We shall not eat with you."

‡ Modern Kandahar. It is said that as Dhritarashtra was blind, Gandhari kept her eyes bandaged all through her life. She could not bear the idea that she should have sight whereas her husband should not.

§ She was also called Kunti. She was the sister of Krishna's father. Madri was the princess of Madra.

|| An Aryan clan always took its name from one of the





Dhritarashtra had many sons of whom Durjadhana was the eldest.\* But the Kurus did not know for many years together whether Pandu had begotten any sons, or he was alive or dead. Many years after, Kunti returned to Hastinapur, the capital of the Kurus, with five young princes.† She said that the three elder ones were born of her, and the two younger ones, who were twins, were the sons of Madri. As both Pandu and Madri were dead, she thought it proper to come back to

most celebrated of its members. Thus the Kurus took their name from king Kuru, the Yadus from king Yadu, and so on. But some of the Oriental scholars of Europe do not agree with us in saying that a clan was named after the Pandu princes, though we meet with a race called Pandya or Pandras in the history of India. See Max Muller's *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 44; Weber's *History of Indian Literature*, p. 185; *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XV., pp. 95-96.

\* It is said Gandhari gave birth to one hundred sons.

† Kunti had a *Kanin* son who became afterwards famous under the name of Karna. It is said that in order to hide her shame, she placed the child in a pot and threw it in the river. The child was found by a charioteer who gave it to his wife named Radha, who brought it up. This child afterwards became the greatest warrior of the Kuru army. The interpolators have related an extraordinary story to save Kunti's honour, which is useless to relate here.



the Kuru capital. These princes were respectively named Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva.

The young princes were welcomed by the aged Bishma and king Dhritarashtra as their own children. They were affectionately brought up by Bishma and Vidura, and placed under the tuition of Drona, the great preceptor of that age. Arjuna became the greatest warrior amongst all the princes, but Durjadhana and Bhima became matchless in club-fight.

They thus grew up to the great joy of the people of Hastinapur, to whom Pandu was very much beloved, till at last the Kuru princes with Durjadhana at their head grew extremely jealous of them. Durjadhana tried to harm them in various ways. Attempts were made even on their lives, but the Pandu princes quietly and silently suffered, nay they tried their utmost to court their good will. But all were of no avail; they were finally obliged to leave Hastinapur to save their lives.\* When they were thus wandering

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\* When Durjadhana failed in his attempts to kill the Pandu princes, he induced them to go with their mother to a place called Varanavata where he caused a house of lac to be built. He sent one Purochana with secret instructions to get the Pandavas to sleep in that house, and when they would be



about in exile, the great event of which we spoke, namely the *Sayamvara* of the Panchala princess, took place. It created a great stir amongst the chiefs and potentates of Northern India.

Draupadi was the only daughter of the great Panchala king, Drupada. She had two brothers, named Dhrishtadumna and Shikhandin,—both of them being great warriors. She was the most beautiful and accomplished princess in the Aryan Land. Young potentates from far and near longed to marry her ; but the king Drupada desired to

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fast asleep, Purochana was to set fire to it. Vidura warned the princes of their danger. Thus instead of Purochana's setting fire to the house, they themselves did it and fled away from the place. It was rumoured that they were all killed.

It must be mentioned here that many of the Kurus doubted the legitimacy of the Pandavas ; for they said, "Pandu is long dead, how could he beget such young children ?" It is related that the five Pandavas were begotten by five celestials, namely Dharma, Vayu, Indra, and the two Aswins, as Karna was by Surja. It is said that Kunti obtained a talisman from Rishi Durvasha by which she could call to her presence any god she liked. Probably these stories were afterwards added to the Mahavarata to gloss over the custom which became hateful in India in later days.





bestow her on the Pandu Prince Arjuna,\* for Arjuna was the only prince in India who deserved to possess such a prize as Draupadi. The old Drupada knew that the third Pandava was the greatest warrior in India; he also knew that the sons of Pandu would never be able to live in amity with the sons of Dhritarashtra. If he could win them over, it would be easy for him to wreak his direct vengeance on the Kurus who only a few years ago invaded his kingdom and carried fire and sword throughout his dominions.† But when

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\* Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter CLXXXVII., Sloka 8, says :— "Jajnasena (Drupada) always cherished the wish to bestow his daughter on Kiriti (Arjuna), the son of Pandu, but did not speak it out to anybody."

† It is related in the Adi Parva, Mahavarata, that the illustrious preceptor of that age, the celebrated Drona, was a great friend of king Drupada. But they finally quarrelled, and Drona came to the hereditary enemies of the Panchalas, namely the Kurus. Drona's brother-in-law, Kripa, was then the preceptor of the Kuru Princes. When Drona came to Hastinapur, he was welcomed with all respects, and all the Kuru princes were placed under his charge. A few years after, he marched with the Kurus and invaded Panchala. Drupada was defeated and half of his kingdom was annexed to the Kuru dominions. Drupada then performed a great Sacrifice in order to have a son who would kill Drona. From that Sacrifice arose two sons and one daughter,—the sons



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He made all arrangements to hold the *Sayamvara* of his daughter, the Pandavas were exiles—wandering from place to place.

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were Dhristadumna and Shikhandin, and the daughter was Draupadi.



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## CHAPTER XIX

## THE MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI

KING Drupada contrived to do something by which he was able to bestow his beautiful daughter on the very person whom he selected for her. It would be better for us to quote the ancient chronicler.\*

"The Panchala king caused a very stiff bow to be made,—a bow incapable of being bent by any man except Arjuna. He caused a machinery to be erected in the sky and set up a mark to be shot through that machinery. The king Drupada then proclaimed the *Sayamvara* with these words :—'He who will string this bow, and he who will be able to shoot the mark above the machinery will obtain my daughter.' Having heard this, all the

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\* Henceforth we shall follow the Mahavarata in writing the account of Krishna's life, for there is nothing more of historical value in any of the Puranas. As the original story of the Mahavarata was written by a contemporary chronicler, we shall try to adhere to its descriptions as much as possible, always rejecting those matters that we have referred to in the Introduction.





chiefs and potentates of Aryavarta arrived at the capital of the Panchala king."

"The *Sayamvara* arena was built on an auspicious ground. It was surrounded by palaces and enclosed on all sides by a wall and a moat. It was ornamented with gates and arches, and covered all over with a beautiful canopy. It resounded with the sounds of thousands of trumpets. It was scented with *Aguru* (black aloe), ornamented with garlands and sprinkled with sandal-paste."

"The assemblage of kings and princes daily increased, and the arena looked gay with the performances of the actors and dancers. When this grand assembly had assembled for fifteen days, then on the sixteenth day, Draupadi, having bathed and having been attired in the best robes and adorned with all her ornaments, entered the arena, carrying in her hand a golden dish, on which there were garlands of flowers and other offerings of the *Arghya*."\*

"All the musical instruments having been stopped, Dhristadumna came forward taking hold of his sister's arms. He stood in the midst of the assembly and spoke thus in a loud voice,

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\* *Arghya* is a collection of a few things. It was always offered to a man whom one specially wanted to honour.



## THE MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI

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“Hear, O ye assembled princes, this is the bow, that is the mark, and these are the arrows. Shoot the mark through the orifice of the machinery. Truly do I say, he who, possessing noble birth, beauty, and strength, will achieve this great feat shall to-day obtain for his wife my sister Draupadi.”\*

The five Pandu princes were present in that great *Sayamvara* assembly. They came there in disguise and were seated amongst the mendicant Brahmanst† as one of them. They were eager to form an alliance with the powerful Panchala king so that they might

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\* Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 18th.

† In the vedic age in which Krishna was born, the caste system, as it now exists in India, was not formed. Those that performed the Sacrifices, on behalf of the kings and wealthy men were called the Brahman. They were paid for their labour, and consequently they held rather a lower position than the ruling class. But if any of them were learned, as they often were, he was highly respected by all. But there was no caste distinction; all men had equal rights to study the Vedas, wield the arms, or till the land. Vyasa was the son of a Brahman, named Parasara, but his mother was a fisherman's daughter, who afterwards became the wife of a king. Drona was a Brahman, but instead of being a great scholar, he was a great warrior. Our readers will find the whole of the Mahavarata bears out our assertion.



get back their just portion in their father's kingdom. They were also desirous to display their prowess in an assembly in which almost all the Aryan princes were present. Leaving their mother in a potter's house, they came to the assembly and sat apart amongst the Brahmans who had come there in hundreds in expectation of receiving alms.

Krishna was also present, but he did not go there to obtain the hands of Draupadi, for he made no attempt to get her. But he was the only man amongst the thousands that were present there who recognised the Pandavas through their disguise. Though he never met his cousins before, yet he easily guessed that the five so-called Brahmans were no other than the five Pandu princes. He scrutinised every man present there, as was his wont, and the Pandavas could not escape his penetrating eye. Turning to his brother Rama, he told him his thoughts, adding, "I have heard the sons of Pandu escaped from the burning lac-house." To which Rama replied, "I am glad to hear that our father's sister Pritha with her heroic sons are alive."

The Kuru princes, Duryodhana and others with their great friend Karna were also present. The great Jarasandha and Sisupala with all their allies and friends were there.





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Each and every one of the Kurus was eager to possess the beautiful princess, and if possible thus to wipe out by this alliance their everlasting feud with the Panchala king.

"But," the ancient chronicler adds, "those kings could not even in their imagination string that bow. In exerting with swelling lips to string it, each according to his strength, education, skill and energy, they were all tossed up on the ground. Seeing this, that great Bowman Karna went to the place where the bow was. He quickly raised it up, strung it, and placed the arrows on the string. But Draupadi said in a loud voice, 'I will not choose a Suta (charioteer's son) for my husband.' Laughing in vexation, Karna threw aside the bow and came to his seat."

"When all the kings desisted from the attempt, Arjuna rose from among the Brahman. The Brahmins cried out, 'How can a stripling, unpractised in arms and weak in strength, string that bow which the celebrated princes have failed to do? If he fails to achieve success in the act, which he has undertaken by his boyish restlessness, the Brahmins will be ridiculous in the eyes of the kings.'"



Arjuna came to the bow and stood there as steady as a mountain. Walking round the bow in due form, he took it up. He strung it in the twinkling of an eye, shot the mark, and brought it down on the ground through the orifice. A great uproar arose in the arena; the Brahmans waved their garments in joy; the assembled kings and princes uttered exclamations of grief and despair; the musicians struck up hundreds of drums and trumpets, and the bards and the heralds chanted the praises of the hero. Draupadi slowly walked up to Arjuna with a white robe and a garland of flowers."

But the disappointed chiefs rose in arms; they made an attempt to carry away the princess by force, but Arjuna was too strong for any of them. A battle was about to ensue, which would have been fought to the bitterest end had not Krishna risen to be the mediator. He was known by all the princes present there to be far superior to them both in arms and in learning. Therefore when he rose and said, "This princess has been justly and in accordance with the Ordinance won by this Brahman," they ceased fighting and peaceably went away to their respective kingdoms.

The Panchala princess Draupadi was finally married in due form to the five Pandu



## THE MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI

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princess.\* When the Pandavas had been married, Krishna sent to them various golden ornaments set with pearls and gems. He made them many other presents, of which they were in great need at the time, in order to keep up their position as the princes of Kurujangala.†

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\* Such marriages were common in the age of which we speak. We quote the Atharva Veda 9-5-27-28.

"The woman that accept a husband when her first husband is alive is never separated from him by giving away *Aja Panchandana*. If the second husband gives away blazing *Aja Panchandana* with *Dakshina*, he and his wife go to the same region." See also the Atharva Veda 5-17-8.

The Pandavas passed their early life in Tibet. It is still a prevalent custom of that country for the women to have a plurality of husbands. This custom is still to be met with among some of the Hindu castes in many parts of India, specially in Orissa.

† This custom disappeared with the Vedic age. It became then absolutely necessary for the writers of the Brahmanical period *i. e.* when Brahmanical supremacy was extreme, to gloss it over. They could not bear the idea that such was the custom of their forefathers. Thus from Chapters CXCI., to CCI., *Adi Parva*, *Mahavarata*, had to be interpolated. In these chapters we find that when the Pandavas returned home, they cried from the door, "Mother, we have got splendid alms to-day." The mother replied, "Whatever it be, my sons, divide it among all of you." So that their mother's word might not become false, they married





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When they met, Yudhisthira asked Krishna, "O prince, how have you been able to trace us, living as we do in disguise?" Krishna smilingly replied, "O king, fire, even if it is covered, can easily be known. Who else among men except the Pandavas can perform such feats?"\*

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the princess all together. Then Vyasa came and said many extraordinary, ridiculous and foolish things to remove the scruples of all concerned. We need not dwell on these chapters, as only a cursory view of them would show that they are the works of a poetaster.

\* Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 190th, Slokas 23-24.



## CHAPTER XX

### INDRAPRASTHA

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THE news of the marriage of the Pandavas with the Panchala princess soon reached Hastinapur. It was a very serious news to the Kuru King. He was fully aware that if he declined to give the Pandavas their father's kingdom, then their hereditary and everlasting enemy, king Drupada, would make it a plea to wreak his vengeance upon him. Therefore Dhritarashtra privately consulted with his son Durjadhana and his friends.\* We shall quote the ancient chornicler.†

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\* Karna, Sukani, and Dushasana were the three chief counsellors of Durjadhana. They always supported him in all his acts, both good and evil. Karna, as we have already said, was a *Kanin* son of Kunti, but he was not aware of it. He grew to be a great warrior, and Durjadhana, eagerly welcomed him to his court in order to keep a balance of power with the Pandavas, for there was no other man in India who could withstand Arjuna except Karna. Durjadhana made him the king of Anga, but as Karna was always present in the Kuru court, we believe the title was only an honorary one. It is probable Karna never ruled over Anga (modern Western Bengal) which was then but a forest.

Sukani was the prince of Gandhara. He was the brother of Gandhari, and therefore the maternal uncle of Durjadhana. This prince always lived in Hastinapur and was in fact the evil genius of Durjadhana.

Dushasana was one of the brothers of Durjadhana and was a great supporter of all his evil acts. Out of the numerous sons of Dhritarashtra, only Vikarna kept himself aloof from the evil designs of his brothers.

† The speeches that we quote are long in the original, but



"Durjadhana and Karna came to the king, and they thus spoke to him, 'O father, you are not acting as you should. You ought to act in such a way as to weaken the power of the Pandavas.' Dhritarashtra, ever weak and ever fond of his sons, said, 'O Durjadhana, tell me what is in your mind and in the mind of Karna?' The wicked Durjadhana then thus addressed his father, 'Let us by the help of trusted and skilful Brahmans privately create dissensions amongst the Pandavas. A quarrel between the sons of Kunti and Madri is not improbable. Or let the king Drupada with his sons and all his ministers of state be tempted by the offer of vast wealth, so that he may abandon the cause of the Pandavas. Or let our spies speak to each of the Pandavas separately the inconveniences of living in Hastinapur. Let them induce the sons of Pandu to live in Panchala. O father, employ any of these means which appear to you faultless. Time passes

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we give only portions of them. We purposely quote them, for they would give our readers a fair idea of the various men with whom we shall have to come in contact all through this work. See Mahavarata, Adi Parva, Chapter 103rd 109th.





away. We should not make any further delay."

Karna said, 'O Durjadhana, in my opinion, your reasonings are not well founded. No machination would succeed against the Pandavas. You have formerly tried to accomplish your desire by various subtle means, but you were not successful in your attempts. In my opinion, this is what is good and advisable for us, namely, to attack and fight with them till they are extirpated.' Having heard what Karna said, the great king Dhritarashtra gave him high praise, and he then thus addressed him, 'You are gifted with great wisdom. You are highly accomplished in arms. Such words, breathing the spirit of heroism, are surely worthy of you. But let Bhishma, Drona, and Vidura and you all consult together. Then adopt that means which will be to our good. He then summoned to him all his ministers and counsellors.

In the council the old patriarch, the ever wise Bhishma, thus spoke :—'O Dhritarashtra, I can never consent to a quarrel with the sons of Pandu. Pandu was to me as you are to me. The sons of Gandhari are as dear to me as those of Kunti. Conclude a treaty with those heroes and give them half of the kingdom. O Durjadhana, as you consider this



kingdom your paternal property, so do the Pandavas. Therefore I ask you not to quarrel with them.'

Drona said, 'O King, friends summoned for consultation should always speak what is right and conducive to fame. O Sire, my opinion is the same as that of the illustrious Bhishma. Let the sons of Kunti have a share in the kingdom.'

Karna rose in anger and said, 'O king these two old men are supported by your wealth. They are supposed to be your best friends. What can be more surprising than that they should give you advice that is not for your good?'

The great preceptor, Drona, mildly said, 'O Karna, know what I have said is good for all. This would be for the prosperity of the Kuru race. If you consider it as productive of evil, say what would be to our good.'

Vidura said, 'O king, your friends have spoken to you what would be for our good, but it appears you do not accept it. Knowing that the claim of the Pandavas to the kingdom is even prior to yours, behave virtuously towards them. The stain of calumny is on you on account of the act of Purochana.\*

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\* This refers to the burning of the lac-house.



Wash yourself off it by kindly behaving towards the sons of Pandu. O King, we have not very long ago waged a great war with king Drupada. If we can now secure him as an ally, it will strengthen our power. The Yadus are numerous and powerful. They will all be there where Krishna will be, and where Krishna is, victory is certain. I have not the least doubt that the great Vrisni prince will stand by the Pandavas. O Sire, having heard that the sons of Pritha are alive, the men of the city and the kingdom have become exceedingly glad. They are all eager to see them. Do what will be agreeable to them.'

King Dhritarashtra then said, 'O Vidura, the learned Bhishma and the illustrious Rishi Drona and you yourself have said the truth, and what is good for us. As the heroic sons of Kunti are the sons of Pandu, so are they also my sons. As my sons are entitled to this kingdom, so certainly are the sons of Pandu. Go, Vidura, and in due affection bring the Pandavas here along with their mother. Bring also with them the Panchala princess, Draupadi of celestial beauty.'

Thereupon Vidura at the command of Dhritarashtra went to king Drupada and to the Pandavas. He took with him numerous





gems and jewels and various other riches to be presented to the Panchala king to the Pandavas, and to Draupadi. Having arrived at the Panchala city, he waited upon king Drupada who received him in proper form. They both enquired after each other's health. Vidura then saw the Pandavas and Krishna, embraced them in affection, and enquired after their health. He then presented to the Pandavas, to Kunti, Draupadi, Drupada and Drupada's sons the gems and jewels and various kinds of wealth sent to them by the Kurus, and thus addressed the great Panchala king. 'O Sire, Dhritarashtra with his ministers, sons and friends has again and again enquired after your welfare. He has been highly honoured by an alliance with you. All the Kurus regard themselves greatly blessed by this alliance. This alliance with you has made them happier than if they have acquired a new kingdom. O Sire, now permit the Pandavas to return to Hastinapur. The Kurus are exceedingly eager to see the sons of Pandu. They are long absent from their home, they too must be very eager to see their own city. All the Kuru ladies, all the citizens, all our subjects are eagerly waiting to see the Panchala Princess, Draupadi.'



The Panchala king replied, 'O Vidura, I too have been exceedingly happy by this alliance. It is proper for these illustrious princes to return to their ancestral kingdom. But it is not proper for me to say this myself. If Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, if Rama and Krishna, who are highly learned in the precepts of religion, wish it, then let the Pandavas along with my daughter go back to Hastinapur.'

Yudhisthira said, 'O Sire, I with all my brothers are dependent on you. We shall all gladly do what you will command us.'

As king Drupada looked at Krishna, he said, 'I am of opinion that they should go. But we must all abide by the opinion of king Drupada who is highly learned in the precepts of virtue.'

The Panchala king then said, 'Having considered all the circumstances, I agree with this foremost of men, this heroic and mighty armed Vrishni prince. They should return to their own ancestral kingdom.'

Having been commanded by the illustrious Panchala king, the Pandavas with Draupadi and Kunti started with Vidura for the city of their forefathers. When king Dhritarashtra learnt that they had arrived,



he sent out the Kuru princes and his great ministers to receive them. The city became radiant with sight-seers. Thousands of men, women and children hastened towards the place to see their beloved Pandu princes returned to their city.

The Pandavas then went to the place and worshipped the feet of Dhritarashtra, as also those of Bhishma and also the feet of all else that deserved the honour. They enquired after the health of all, and then entered the palace assigned to them.

When they had taken some rest, they were summoned by the king, who thus addressed them, 'O Yudhisthira, listen with your brothers to what I say. Go to Khandavaprastha,\* so that no differences may again arise between you and my children. If you live there, none shall be able to injure you.'

Agreeably to the king's order, the Pandavas started for Khandavaprastha. It was a fearful forest, but they founded a great city there and named it Indraprastha. They received only an extensive dreary land for their kingdom—an wild tract covered with

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\* As Hastinapur stood on the banks of the *Ganges*, so was Khandavaprastha situated on the banks of the *Jamuna*.





dense forest. But they did not complain ; they began to build up there a great kingdom, which soon became the greatest in all India. Having settled them in their new city, Krishna with their permission returned to Dwarka.



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## CHAPTER XXI

### THE MARRIAGE OF SUBHADRA

SOME TIME after, when the Pandavas had comfortably settled down in their new city, Arjuna went to pay a visit to the Vrishni prince Krishna in his own city Dwarka.\* We shall again quote our historian :—

When the invincible Arjuna came to the

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\* Chapter, CCXX., to CCXXI., *Adi Parva*, *Mahavarata* are interpolations to gloss over the marriage of Draupadi. They relate the arrival of Narada in the Pandava Court. He asked them to make an arrangement amongst themselves so that they might not quarrel over their wife. Under his advice, the Pandavas took a vow that if any of them would approach Draupadi when one of them would be with her, then he would go to exile for twelve years.

One day when Judhishthira was with Draupadi, a Brahmana pitiously appealed to Arjuna to rescue his kine from the robbers. Arjuna faced the dire calamity of exile and entered the room in which Judhishthira was with Draupadi at the time, for in that room he had all his weapons. Having rescued the kine, he returned to his brothers and asked their permission to go away to exile. He left Indraprastha and roved about many places till at last he came to the *Provasa*.



holy and charming Provāsa,\* Krishna heard of it and went to meet his friend. Embracing each other, they enquired after each other's health. They spent some time in the Provāsa and then went to the Raivataka hill. Before their arrival, the hill was, at the command of Krishna, decorated in various ways by many artificers. Various sorts of eatables were also collected for the reception of the Pandu prince. Enjoying everything that was provided for him, Arjuna sat down to witness the performances of actors and dancers. After dismissing them all with proper respect, the Pandava hero then retired for the night.

He rose in the morning, awakened by the sweet songs and melodious notes of the *Vina*,† and by the panegyrics and benedictions of the bards. After he had performed the daily rites, he was accosted with affection by the Vrisni prince. Then ascending a golden chariot, he started with Krishna for Dwarka.

The citizen of the Vrisni city came by hundreds and thousands into the public

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\* This was the most sacred pilgrimage of that age. It was in Guzrat, very near Dwarka.

† *Vina* is a stringed musical instrument.





streets to see him. Dwarka with its gardens, houses and streets, was beautifully decorated to give a grand reception to the Pandu prince. He was respectfully welcomed by all the Bhojas, the Andhakas, the Vrisnis and the whole Yadu race. He in return worshipped all that deserved his worship and received their blessings. He was accorded a hearty welcome and affectionate reception by all the young men of the Yadu race. He too again and again embraced them all. He then passed many days in the delightful mansion of Krishna.

A few days after his arrival, a great festival was held by the Vrisnis on the Raivataka hill.\* In this great festivity in honour of the hill, Arjuna gave away much wealth to the hundreds of Brahmans that assembled there. The Raivataka was in a sea of merriment; the musicians played in concert on all their musical instruments, the dancers danced, and the songsters sang. The effulgent youths of the Vrisni race, adorned with ornaments, looked handsome everywhere.

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\* Our readers will find that Krishna introduced his festivity in honour of the hill even amongst his own clansmen. We need not remind our readers that he first held it in the *Vrindavana* in honour of the hill *Govardhana*.



Intoxicated with drink, adorned with beautiful garlands, attired in costly robes, accompanied by their wives and followed by the musicians, they sported about like the celestials in heaven.

When thus walking about, Krishna brought Arjuna to the place where his sister, the beautiful Subhadra, was sporting with her companions. As soon as Arjuna saw her, he was struck with her extraordinary beauty. Having seen that Arjuna was looking at her with marked attention, Krishna smilingly asked, 'How is it that the mind of a man like you is thus agitated by seeing a girl?' Arjuna asked who the maiden was, and Krishna replied, 'She is my sister, Subhadra. She is the most beloved daughter of my father. If your mind is really set upon her, I shall speak to my father.'

Arjuna said, 'She is the daughter of Basudeva and the sister of Krishna, she is matchless in beauty,—whom can she not fascinate? If your sister become my wife, I shall then consider that I have gained all the prosperity of the world. Tell me the means whereby I may obtain her.'

Krishna replied, 'Friend, *Sayamvara* is no doubt the form of marriage prevalent amongst us, but it would be very doubtful in



your case, for we do not know her temper and disposition—she may not chose you. In the case of heroes the forcible taking away of a maiden for the purpose of marriage is also praiseworthy. Therefore if you are eager to marry her, carry her off.\*

Having settled every thing about what should be done, Krishna and Arjuna sent some swift messengers to Judhisthira at Indraprastha. When in due course of time Arjuna got his brother's assent, he decided in consultation with Krishna all that was to be done.

Learning one day that the Vrisni princess had gone to the Raivataka hill, Arjuna set out on Krishna's chariot as if in a hunting excursion. He waited on the way by which subhadra would return. As soon as he saw her he suddenly rushed towards her and took her upon his chariot. He then drove fast away towards his own city Indraprastha.

In the meanwhile the armed attendants of the princess ran towards Dwarka to give

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\* It is quite apparent Krishna was all along eager to marry his sister to Arjuna. But he was aware that his proud kinsmen would not agree to bestow a Vrisni princess on a Pandava, for as we have already said there was a great doubt about the legitimacy of their birth. It is for this reason that he advised Arjuna to carry Subhadra away.





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information of what had happened. They rushed into the Yadava court and represented to the *Savapala*\* that the princess Subhadra had been carried away by the Pandu prince. Having heard this, the *Savapala* immediately blew his golden trumpet, calling every one to arms. Alarmed at that sound, the Bhojas, the Vrissnis and the Andhakas poured in from all directions. When they heard what had happened, they all cried, 'Yoke your cars, yoke your cars. We must punish the impudent Kuru.' But Valarama asked them to have patience and addressed them thus, 'O Senseless men, what are you doing, when Krishna does say nothing? Let Krishna speak out what he proposes to do.' Then he turned towards his younger brother and thus spoke to him. 'Why do you not speak? Why are you silent? It was for your sake that Arjuna was welcomed and received with all honour by us. It now appears that wretch, that fool does not deserve our welcome and honour. By insulting us all, he has carried away Subhadra by force. He has placed his foot on our head. Never shall I put up with the insult offered by Arjuna.'

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\* *Savapala* was the chief officer of the court.



Krishna with great calmness said, 'Arjuna has not insulted our family by what he has done. Rather he has enhanced our glory. Arjuna knows that we are not mercenary and we shall not give away Subhadra to him by receiving wealth. He regarded the *Sayamvara* doubtful in its consequences, for Subhadra might make some other choice. He is not a man that would accept a bride as a gift, as if she were a cattle. He knew that there was none who would sell to him his own daughter. Under the circumstances Arjuna and no other alternative than to carry away the maiden. He has done it according to custom and ordinance.\* This alliance is a very proper one. Arjuna is the fittest husband for Subhadra. He comes of the illustrious Bharata race; he is also our cousin, the son of our father's sister, he is the greatest warrior of our age. Who could be a better match for our sister than Arjuna? I would, therefore, ask you to go to him and stop him by conciliation. If we

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\* We have already said in our footnote, page 155, that the carrying away of a maiden was thought by a Aryans to be the best way of marrying a bride. Krishna pointed out his reasons for not disapproving the conduct of Arjuna.



## THE MARRIAGE OF SUBHADRA

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to fight with him and if we are defeated, our fame will be destroyed for ever. There is no disgrace, however, in reconciliation.'

Having heard these words of Krishna, the Yadus thought that he was right. They then all went and stopped him. Then bringing him back in great honour, they bestowed their beloved princess Subhadra on him with great pomp and grandeur.





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## CHAPTER XXII

## THE GREAT ASSEMBLY HALL

AFTER the marriage of Subhadra, the people of Dwarka, with Rama and Krishna at their head, according to custom started for Indraprastha to pay a complimentary visit to the Pandavas. When they all were at Indraprastha, the Pandu princes desired to clear a larger tract of land than what they possessed by burning down the great Khandava forest.\* The order was issued, thousands of men

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\* After the marriage of Subhadra follow Chapters CCXXIII to CCXXVI., these are the last chapters of the Adi Parva Mahavarata. They are called the *Khandavadaha Parva*, or the burning of the *Khandava* forest. There is hardly anything of historical value in these chapters. They are obvious after-interpolations, added by later poets who based their descriptions on the burning of the *Khandava* by the Pandavas. Perhaps it was this fact only that was mentioned by Vyasa in the original Mahavarata. At the age of which we speak, the Aryans settled in India by burning down the forests with which the whole country was covered. A few chapters higher up we find that the Pandavas obtained only a fearful forest to found their city upon. It was quite natural, therefore, that they would burn down this forest to



were collected, and every arrangement was made. When everything necessary was done, Krishna and Arjuna with all the people set out from their city, and on reaching the forest, they set fire to it. Soon did the all-destroying element fearfully rage and foam and roar, consuming everything that came in its way. It was an awful sight. Thousands of birds flew up and dropped down into the raging fire with their wings and feathers burnt down. Innumerable wild beasts piteously screamed and roared, and ran in all directions, but none of them was able to get out of the reach of the fearful fire that enveloped them like a fiery demon, licking his tongue to taste their blood. A Danava,\* named Moy,

clear the tract. Perhaps the great Vyasa wrote this much, but the later poets added that one day when Krishna and Arjuna were sitting on the banks of the *Jamuna*, the fire-god, Agni, came to them in the disguise of a Brahman and he asked them to give him some food. When asked what food he desired to have, he then introduced himself as the fire-god and told the two heroes that he wanted to consume the *Khandava* forest, for he had got dyspepsia by eating too much of sacrificial *ghee* and the consumption of the *Khandava* was its only remedy. Krishna and Arjuna promised to help him in the matter and thus the *Khandava* forest came to be burnt down. These descriptions are too palpable fictions to be taken into serious consideration.

\* The original inhabitants of India. See our note in p. 64.



who used to live in this forest was at the point of being burnt down; but Arjuna hastened to his rescue and saved his life. When the forest was completely burned down, Moy came to Arjuna and thus addressed him, "O son of Kunti, I have been saved by you from this angry fire-god, who desired to consume me. Tell me what I shall do for you."\*

Arjuna replied, "O great Danava, you have done everything. You have nothing more to do. Go wherever you like. Be always well-disposed towards us as we are always well-disposed towards you."

Moy said, "O lord, what you have said is fully worthy of you. But, O descendant of Bharata, I gladly desire to do something for you. I am a great artist,—in fact I am the Viswakarma† of the Danavas. O son of Pandu, allow me to do something for you."

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\* See Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Chapter I. The major portion of the Sava Parva is evidently a portion of the original Mahavarata. As the story of Moy Danava is found in it, we accept it as a fact. Another ground for our accepting it is that the Great Assembly Hall that Moy built was the axle on which the whole story of the Mahavarata rolled.

† Viswakarma literally means the maker of the universe. But here it refers to the Engineer-in-chief of the Danavas.





Arjuna said, "O Danava, you consider that your life has been saved by me. Such being the case, I cannot make you do anything for me. But I am not willing to disappoint you. Do something for Krishna. That will be sufficient requital for my services to you,"

Moy turned towards Krishna and pressed him to say what he could do for him; but Krishna did not ask any thing to be done for him. He said, "O best of artists, if you desire to do some service to me, then build a large Assembly Hall for king Yudhisthira. Build such an Assembly Hall that mortal men may not be able to build another like it."

Then Krishna and Arjuna, having told every thing to Yudhisthira, introduced Moy to him. The king received him with all honours, and Moy too accepted them with due respect and humility.

Then at the request of Krishna, Moy in course of time built a magnificent and wonderful Assembly Hall for the Pandavas. The people gazed at it in wonder and astonishment, but none of them ever dreamed what would be the outcome of its construction in their city. It never crossed their mind why out of thousands of things Krishna asked the Danava to build an Assembly Hall for the Pandu princes.



This beautiful and matchless *Sava*\* at no distant date produced two very important but contrary results. It led king Yudhisthira to perform the great *Rajsvaya* Sacrifice in which he assumed the Imperial Dignity. His magnificence, power and wealth filled the minds of his cousins, the Kurus,—Durjadhana and others,—with great jealousy. They challenged him to a game of dice, and winning from him all that he possessed, made him take a vow to go to exile for thirteen years. These dissensions and fraternal quarrels finally ended in the great battle of Kurukshetra in which almost all the chiefs and potentates of India, nay half the people of the Aryan race, lost their lives.

• But in this sanguinary field of battle where millions of men fell fighting, where blood streamed forth and where death danced like a fierce demon, Krishna preached his Great Religion. On this fearful field he preached to the human race the Words of God. In the midst of the dead and

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\* *Sava* is an Assembly Hall. Here it means the hall where the king held his court and performed all his public and royal functions.



the dying, he raised his finger and pointed to mankind the way to the land of everlasting bliss. In the holy field of Kurukshetra did he establish in the world the *Kingdom of Righteousness*—not in mere words, but in living reality.





## CHAPTER XXIII

## PROPOSAL FOR RAJSUYA

THE kingdom of Indraprastha became more prosperous and more powerful than the old kingdom of Hastinapur.\* With the prowess of arms of his four heroic brothers, Yudhisthira became a very great king. Many chiefs and potentates acknowledged his supremacy, and his treasury was filled with immense wealth.† His relatives, friends and ministers urged him to assume the Imperial Dignity by performing the great Rajsuya Sacrifice. The grand Assembly Hall was ready, his power was immense,—why should he not become the king of all the kings of Northern India?‡

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\* After the burning of the forest and the building of the Assembly Hall, there follow eight chapters in the Sava Parva, Mahavarata. They contain a lecture by Narada to Yudhisthira. There is no mention of Krishna in any of these chapters.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapters XXV to XXXII, the conquests of the Pandavas.

‡ From Chapter XIII to Chapter XIX is the Rajsuya Sacrifice has been discussed. We have already quoted two



Though tempted to perform this great Sacrifice, Yudhisthira hesitated; he was not a man to do things in haste. He knew that there was only one man amongst his friends and relatives who would speak out the truth, however unpleasant it might be.

extracts from these chapters. (Chapter XVI, Krishna's speech in 149 and 150 pages). We have quoted in this chapter many more passages, that appeared to us to be the part of the original Mahavarata. Interpolations are very prominent in the Sava Parva of the Mahavarata,—more palpable and easier to be detected than in any other Parva of the Mahavarata. Repetitions are also too many, and contradictory statements are often met with. We need not say we have rejected all palpable fictions and obvious interpolations.

In Chapters XVII and XVIII, an extraordinary description of the birth of Jarasandha is given;—we might call it the work of a fourth rate story-teller. It cannot be the writing of the great Vyasa. We quote a passage, Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XVII., Slokas 32—41 :—

"O best of the Bharata race, recalling his former promise, that best of kings (Brihadratha) gave that one fruit (which he received from an ascetic) to his two wives. His two beautiful wives are the mango, dividing it into two equal parts. In consequence of the infallibility of the Rishi's word, both of them conceived. Seeing them in that state, the king was filled with great joy. Some time after, when the proper season came, each of the two queens brought forth two fragmentary bodies. Each of these bodies had one eye, one



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He knew he would not speak things only to please him as his friends, relatives and ministers often did. He therefore thought of Krishna, and sent a swift messenger to Dwarka to invite the great Vrisni prince to Indraprastha. Krishna was the great Mentor of all the chiefs and potentates of India.

In due time Krishna arrived at the Pandava city. Then in full court king Yudhisthira thus spoke to him,\* "O Krishna, I have desired to perform the great Rajsuya Sacrifice. But it cannot be performed through my simply wishing to do it. You

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arm, one leg, half a stomach, and half a face. Seeing the fragmentary bodies, they began to tremble. The helpless sisters then in great anxiety consulted together. They then abandoned in sorrow the fragments which had life in them. The two midwives then carefully wrapped up those still-born fragments and went out of the inner apartments by the back door. Throwing away the bodies, they returned in haste. O best of men, some time after a Rakshasha woman, named Jara, who lived on flesh and blood, took up the fragments that lay on the crossing of the road. Being impelled by fate that Rakshasha woman united the fragments to make them easier to carry. O best of men, as soon as the fragments were united, they formed into a heroic child of one body."

\* Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XIII., Slokas 46-51.





know what is necessary to accomplish it. My friends and ministers have said that I should perform it; but your words will be my guide in this matter. Some, without nothing the difficulties, offer advices merely out of friendship. Some out of self-interest say what will be agreeable to the listener. Some consider what is beneficial to themselves is the only fittest thing to be done. But you are above all motives. You have conquered anger and desire. You should tell me what is beneficial both to me and to the world."

The unpleasant truth that his friends, relatives, and ministers did not speak to him, Krishna told him in plain words. He told him that though he was no doubt the fittest person to assume the Imperial Dignity, yet he would not be allowed to do it,—not at least without a great struggle,—by Jarasandha who was then holding it in *Aryavarta*. He said,\* "O best of the Bharata race, surely are you worthy of becoming an Emperor. But, in my opinion, you will not be able to perform the Rajsuya sacrifice, so long as the highly powerful Jarasandha remains alive.

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\* Ibid, Chapter XIV., Slokas 61—70.



He has kept many kings imprisoned in his city, Girivraja.\* By defeating the kings, he has become the master over all the sovereigns. From his fear we have left Mathura and fled to the distant Dwarka. Therefore I say, O great king, if you desire to perform the Rajsuya, try to release the kings and kill the great tyrant. Unless you do this, your proposal can never be successful, for he will oppose you, he will destroy your sacrifice,—nay, he will destroy yourself and your kingdom. On the other hand if you can kill him, you will destroy the greatest tyrant of the world. You will save innumerable kings from life-long misery, and earn everlasting renown. To kill an oppressor of humanity like Jarasandha would be of the greatest benefit to the world. One, who aspires to be the greatest of all kings, should

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\* The city of Girivraja was situated in Modern Behar. The famous old city of Rajgriha was the ancient city Girivraja. The ruins of this ever-renowned city are still to be seen a few miles from the modern town of Behar, one of the subdivisional head quarters of the Patna district. The city was enclosed by five hills which still hold up their heads as they did at the time of Jarasandha, and again many hundred years after at the time of Goutama Buddha. In the Mahavarata, these five hills are respectively called, *Vaihara*, *Varaba*, *Vrishava*, *Rishigiri* and *Chaitaka*



have the greatest good of the world as his life's work."

"We are all alarmed," said Judhithira, "at the prowess and wickedness of the king of Magadha. when you are afraid of Jarasandha's might, how can I consider myself strong enough to fight with him?"

A council of war was then held. Bhima was for immediate fight,—Arjuna was not at all afraid of the wicked king,—Nakula and Sahadeva longed to have a trial of strength with the great Magadha potentate,—the generals and warriors of the Pandava army all expressed their eagerness to march against the Magadha kingdom and crush its cruel king. But Krishna mildly said, "Men of immature understanding begin an act without having an eye to what may happen in future."\* Then he turned towards the king and said, "O Sire with the army that you command, if you meet Jarasandha on an open field of battle, it would not be possible for you to defeat him. His stupendous army will crush yours as a lion does a lamb. It would be mere needless and wanton bloodshed of innumerable men,—innocent and poor,—who should not be butchered either for the guilt of Jarasandha or for the fulfilment of

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\* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XV.





your desire. It would be one of the greatest sinful acts. One should not commit sin even to bring about good. Therefore, O great king, I ask your permission to take with me Bhima and Arjuna and go to meet the Magadha king. We shall challenge him to a single combat; and as a warrior he will never be able to refuse us. I can assure you, Sire, with whomsoever amongst us three, he elects to fight, he is sure to be killed by him. We shall thus kill him in a fair fight without bringing about a sanguinary war and filling the earth with blood."

"O Krishna," replied the king, "out of my selfish motive and out of desire for the Imperial Dignity, how can I send you to Jarasandha? I consider Bhima and Arjuna as my two eyes and you as my mind. How shall I be able to live without my mind and eyes?"

Arjuna, Bhima and Krishna asked him not to entertain any fear for their safety. They would be sure to kill the Magadha king and return in safety to Indraprastha. They dispelled his fears and anxieties and secured his consent. They then started for the kingdom of Magadha.\*

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\* The bare facts that we have narrated in this small Chapter have been picked up from eight long chapters i. e. from Chapters XII to XX of the Sava Parva of the Maha-



But before they could reach the city of Girivraja they thought it proper to avoid all public notice. It was impossible for such three men to travel across India without creating a great commotion all over the country. They, therefore, assumed the guise of *Snataka*\* Brahmanas and started on foot as mendicants travelling over the country.†

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varata. We have already said that a careful study of the Sava Parva would convince any one that it contains much of the original Mahavarata. The reason is that interpolations are more apparent and easier to be detected in this Parva than in any other of the Mahavarata. A little careful study would show that the original and later writings are too distinct to be altogether imperceptible. We shall point them out as we proceed.

\* *Snataka* Brahman is one who has taken up *Snataka* (ascetic) vows.

† In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 70-73, the death of Jarasandha is described. Vishnu Purana and Harivansa say nothing of this affair.



## CHAPTER XXIV

## ARRIVAL AT GIRIVRAJA

TRAVELLING through many countries, the three princes at last arrived at the great city of the Magadha king.\* According to custom and ordinance,† they did not enter the city

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\* we are studiously trying to adhere as much as possible to the original descriptions of the Mahavarata, for we have already said that we believe that much of the Sava Parva of the present Mahavarata is the original story written by the great Vyasa. We have, however, rejected many passages as being interpolations and repetitions. Our readers will find that though we have rejected them and did not add any thing, yet the continuity of the narrative or of the description is in no way disturbed. Perhaps this is a sufficient proof that the passages that we have rejected are interpolations and after-additions.

† There were in ancient India some unwritten laws as regards social and military etiquette, manners and customs, morals and ethics. The ancient Aryans strictly followed and respected them. They considered their violation as being the greatest sin. These ordinances were many, and some of them our readers will find in this chapter, such as (1) Not to enter the house or the city of an enemy by the public gate. (2) Not to accept the worship of one who is an enemy. (3) Not to





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through its public gates. They scaled one of the hills\* that surrounded the city, and then forcing a passage through it, they descended in the streets of Girivraja.

They then went straight on to the palace,† and sent intimation to the king that they asked for an interview. The permission was granted, and they were sent for. When they appeared before the great king, they were asked to take their seats and to accept the wor-

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fight with one who has grown fatigued. (4) To refuse a challenge to a single combat &c., &c. We would ask our readers to mark these ancient Aryan "morals" and compare them with those of the modern world. Our readers will come across many of these ancient Aryan ordinances in this little book.

\* This hill was named the Chaitaka.

† Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Sloka 26 says :—"Seeing the great wealth of these shops, those best of men, Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna, proceeded along the public streets. Those greatly powerful heroes snatched garlands from the flower-vendors." Can we believe that men like Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna will forcibly snatch away flowers from the flower-vendors? This "snatching and asking for flowers" is also mentioned in the Vishnu Purana, Chapter XX., Part V., where it describes the entry of Krishna and Rama into Mathura. Perhaps it was a mere custom for the heroes of ancient India to ask and to accept flowers from their vendors. Flowers are still offered to the heroes all over the world.



ship that was offered to a guest, but they declined both with thanks.\* The strange attire and the heroic mien of the visitors struck the king. He looked at them long, and then said,† "It is well-known to me that nowhere in the whole world the Brahmans engaged in observing the *Snataka* vows ever adorn themselves with garlands or with fragrant paste. Who are you then, thus adorned with flowers,—and with hands that bear the marks of the bow-strings? Your costume gives me to understand that you are Brahmans, though you bear all the marks of the warriors? Tell me truly who you are. Breaking down the peak of the *Chaitaka* hill, why have you in disguise entered the city by other ways than through the public gates?"

\* In the Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Slokas 31-34, it is mentioned that when Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna met Jarasandha, the latter two kept silent, and Krishna said that they had taken the vow of silence till mid-night. Having heard this Jarasandha retired and met them at mid-night. We have rejected this description as being interpolation. The style of the couplets shows that it is not the part of the original Mahavarata. Besides, this incident is purposeless. There was no reason why Bhima and Arjuna should remain silent till mid-night, for we find later on that the combat was fought publicly before all the people of Girivraja. The challenge was also made as publicly.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Sloka 42-43.



"O king," replied Krishna, "all men are competent to observe the *Snataka* vows ;— and as persons who adorn themselves with flowers always gain prosperity, we have adorned ourselves with garlands. The wise men enter their enemy's house through a way which is not the public gate. Only in the house of a friend they enter by the proper gate. We have, therefore, done the same. Know also, O king, that entering an enemy's house with the purpose of accomplishing an object, we do not accept the worship offered by him." "I do not recollect," said Jarasandha, "that I have ever done you any injury. When I have done you no harm, why do you consider me as your enemy? I strictly adhere to the practices of my order. I never injure any of my subjects. In bringing this charge against me, you appear to be mistaken."

"Many kings," replied Krishna, "have been made captive by you. After persecuting them, you intend to offer them as sacrifices. You have turned men of your own order into beasts. Having done this cruel wrong to the entire royal race, how do you consider yourself innocent? We practise virtue, and we are capable of protecting virtue; therefore if we do not punish you, your sin will touch





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us. We are always desirous of helping the distressed ; we have therefore come to kill you. Know that we are not Brahmans,—I am Krishna, the Vrisni prince ;—these two are the Pandu princes, Bhima and Arjuna. We challenge you to a single combat. Either liberate the kings or go to the abode of Yama (god of death)."

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\* We should ask our readers to mark the above words of Srikrishna. Krishna says that one who is virtuous and at the same time capable of protecting virtue, *i.e.* preventing others from committing sin, is bound to protect virtue and prevent sin being committed. If he fails in doing it, he is as much a sinner as the one who commits sin. In his opinion a man should not only be virtuous and perform all virtuous acts, but he should also prevent others from committing sin. In Udyoga Parva, Chapter LXXII, Sloka 18, Mahavarata, we find the following passage. "The sin that is committed by killing one who does not deserve to be killed is as great as the sin of not killing one who deserves to be killed :"  
*i. e.* one who does not deserve to be killed should *by no means* be killed, but one who deserves to be killed should *by all means* be killed. Krishna told Jarasandha in plain words, "You are a great sinner, and as we are capable of preventing you from committing sin, we have considered it our duty to make an attempt to stop you in your sinful career. You are beyond all reform,—no amount of persuasion would bring about a change for the better in you, therefore you deserve to be killed ; that is the only means of preventing you from committing sin. We



Jarasandha smiled and said, "I never make a king prisoner without defeating him. O Krishna, neither am I the person to liberate my prisoners through fear or by threats. I am ready to fight with troops against troops, or alone against you one, two or three, separately or all together." "O king," said Krishna, "then tell us with whom amongst us three you intend to fight?"

The great king of Magadha cast scornful glances at Krishna and Arjuna whom he considered to be too insignificant to be accepted by him as his adversaries. He turned like an infuriated bull towards Bhima and said, "O Prince, I shall fight with you. It is always better to be vanquished by a superior than by an inferior one."\*

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have therefore come to kill you." Buddha, Christ and other great prophets also tried to prevent the commission of sin in the world by preaching,—but Krishna went a step further. He not only reformed the sinners by preaching, but where he found a sinner beyond all reform, he removed him from the world. To eradicate sin in the world he was as much an evangelist spreading his great teachings broadcast as a judge passing sentence where it was necessary.

\* We have said that none should accept the entire Sava parva (as we now possess) as being written by Vyasa. If we do it, we shall then have to take the following as an actual fact. In Sava Parva, Chapter XIX, Slokas 22-24 say :—



## CHAPTER XXV

## THE DEATH OF JARASANDHA

JARASANDHA ordered his son Sahadeba\* to be installed on the throne and made all preparations for the great combat. We shall once more quote the ancient chronicler :—

“The priests brought the yellow pigment obtained from the cow, also garlands of flowers and other auspicious articles and various excellent medicines for restoring unconsciousness and for alleviating pains. The propitiatory ceremonies for the king with

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\*“Some time after when king Kansa was killed by Krishna, an enmity arose between him (Jarasandha) and Krishna. The greatly powerful king of Magadha whirled a club ninety-nine times and hurled it towards Mathura. That excellent club fell at a distance of ninety-nine *Yojanas*.” It would be fair to mention that the above is taken from the long and ridiculous description of the birth of Jarasandha, which we have already mentioned in our note in page 149.

\* This incident shows that Jarasandha was well aware that his end had come. It also shows how strong were some of the unwritten laws of the ancient Aryans. Even a man like Jarasandha did not dare to refuse the challenge or to do any-





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benedictions were then performed by an illustrious Brahman. Removing his crown and properly binding his hair, Jarasandha stood up like an ocean bursting through its shore. He then rushed at Bhima like the Asura Vala at Indra.\* Those two great heroes, Jarasandha and Bhima, with their bare arms as their only weapons, then cheerfully engaged in the fight. Seizing each other's arms and twining each other's legs, they slapped their arm-pits."†

thing to destroy his enemies, though he found them alone, unarmed, and unprotected in his own impregnable fort. Jarasandha was sinful, but he was above meanness.

\* This refers to the well-known story of the Puranas, the war between the Devas and the Danavas for the possession of heaven. We need not say Indra was the king of the Devas, *i. e.* the celestials. Many Danava chiefs now and then attacked the plains of heaven and fought with the celestials. Vala was one of them.

† The description of the wrestling between Bhima and Jarasandha as given in the Mahavarata is long. It covers ten slokas from 10 to 20, Chapter XXIII., Sava Parva. Mahavarata. It shows that wrestling was an art in ancient India. There were various feats of wrestling known to the renowned heroes of that age. In this description of the wrestling we find the names of a few of them, such as *Pristavanga*, *Samparva*, *Nemcha*, *Purnakumva*, *Trinaspira*, *Purnadyaga*, &c. We are sorry we cannot quote here the long description of these wrestling feats.



It was a wonderful combat ; and all the people of Girivraja viewed it with wonder and astonishment.\* They fought on day after day ; none could defeat the other,—both were of herculean strength. On the evening of the fourteenth day, the great Magadha king grew fatigued,—he stopped to take breath ; but Bhima fought on and pressed him hard. Having seen this, Krishna thus spoke to Bhima.† “O son of Kunti, the foe that has become tired and fatigued in the fight should not be pressed. Therefore, O prince, you should not now oppress this king.” But Bhima did not give much heed to the words of the Vrisni prince. He said, “O Krishna, this wretch is still before me with girded loins and of sufficient strength. He should not be excused by me.”‡ Having said this, Bhima raised up the strong, but now much

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\* Slokas 21 to 22, Chapter XXIII., Sava Parva Mahavarata say :—“Thousands of citizens, consisting of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, and also women and even old men, came out and assembled there to witness the fight. The crowd became so great that it grew to be a solid mass of human beings having no space between two persons.”

† Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXIII., Slokas 32-33.

‡ The morals of Bhima could not be so high as those of Krishna, but he had still to defend his action by saying



fatigued Jarasandha and whirled him on high. He then pressed his knees against his backbone and broke his body into two. The people of Magadha were struck dumb by fear; loud lamentations rose everywhere; but the great king had fallen in a fair fight and there was no alternative left to the people but to submit to the inevitable.\*

The imprisoned kings were then all liberated; and with them Krishna and the Pandu princes came to a plain outside the city and encamped. They all expressed their heart-felt gratitude to the Vrisni prince; and they thus spoke to him, "O mighty-armed hero, such virtuous acts are no wonder in you. We were all languishing in the fearful hill-fort of the cruel Jarasandha. To our good fortune you have rescued us and thus earned ever-lasting renown. We all bow to you. Command us what we shall do." Krishna smilingly replied, "King Judhishtira is desirous of performing the Rajsuya Sacrifice.

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that Jarasandha was not at all fatigued,—so strong was the moral sense of the people of that age.

\* This incident also shows the respect with which all the people followed the well-known rules of morals. Our readers will find all through this book that the morals of ancient India were very high.





That virtuous king is willing to assume the Imperial Dignity. Help him in his attempt." They all cheerfully promised to do what Krishna said. They then made him various presents and went away to their respective kingdoms.

Bhima, Arjuna and Krishna, then having received large presents from Sahadeva, the newly installed king of Magadha, started back towards Indraprastha.\*

They had a triumphal progress through Northern India for they were now the victors of the greatest king of the Aryan race, nay the destroyers of the greatest tyrant of the age. Thus marching on in the greatest pomp and grandeur they reached in due

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\* There was apparent interpolations throughout the two chapters from which we have culled a few facts that we have put in this chapter. In chapter XXIV., Slokas 22-23 Krishna thought of Gadura, the celestial bird, on whom Vishnu rides. There was no need whatsoever for Krishna's thus thinking of Gadura, but he did it. Here ends the matter, —there is no further mention of the bird. In this chapter also we find that Jarasandha possessed a *celestial* car. There are many more such things all through these chapters. They are evidently after-interpolations. We have dropped all these descriptions, and we believe the continuity of the description is in no way disturbed.



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time the magnificent city of the Pandavas and paid their respects to its pious king.

"O king," said Krishna, "the mighty Jarasandha has been killed by Bhima. All the kings, kept imprisoned at Girivraja, have been liberated. You are worthy of the Imperial Dignity in every respect. Let, therefore, the great Rajsuya Sacrifice be now performed."

King Judhisthira embraced him in joy.



## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE FIRST WORSHIP

Now arrangements were being made on all sides for the great Sacrifice.\* King Yudhisthira thus spoke to his brothers and ministers:—"Let men be appointed to collect without loss of time all those articles that the Brahmins will direct as necessary for the performance of this Sacrifice and also all auspicious necessities and things that Dhaumya† may order to be collected."‡

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\* From Chapter XXV to Chapter XXX., Sava Parva, Mahavarata, is the *Digvijaya Parva*, i. e., the descriptions of the conquests of the various countries made by the four younger Pandavas. There is no doubt that conquests were first made, and the proposal for the Rajsuya Sacrifice was then made. This chapter is culled from Chapters XXXIII to XXXIV., Sava Parva Mahavarata.

† Dhaumya was the family priest of the Pandavas.

‡ The Sacrifices of the ancient Aryans required many articles for the performances of their ceremonies. It would not be interesting to give a list of things required in the performance of a Sacrifice like Rajsuya. See *Srauta Sutra*, *Salapata Brahmana* &c.





In due course of time all arrangements were made. The great Assembly Hall,\* built by Moy, was the place where this magnificent ceremony was to be solemnised. Around it were constructed innumerable mansions in which the royal guests were lodged. Men from all quarters of the earth were invited and welcomed with all the honors due to their respective positions. Musicians played, bards sang—dancers danced ; it was the most magnificent affair ever seen in India.

Each and every one of the chiefs and potentates of *Aryavarta* had come with their armies and retinues,—and each had been lodged in a magnificent palace. The ancient chronicler goes on to say :—“These houses were full of various kinds of eatables. They were adorned with tanks and trees. They were delightful, and furnished with

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\* See pages 203—204. Here is what happened even to Durjodhana in this magnificent hall. Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Chapter XLVII, Slokas 3—6 say :—“One day the son of Dhritarashtra, Durjodhana, came to a place (in this hall) made of crystal. Mistaking it for water, he drew up his clothes. Finding out his mistake, he wandered over the hall. Some time after, he mistook a lake of crystal water adorned with water-flowers for land, and fell into it with a his clothes on.”



every kind of furniture. They were enclosed on all sides with well-built, high and white-washed walls. Their windows were covered with net-works of gold; their interior was adorned with strings of pearls; their floors were covered with costly carpets; and they were all adorned with garlands of flowers and perfumed with excellent aloes."\*

The various duties and functions of the great Sacrifice were then assigned by the Pandava king to various princes and chiefs. Dushasana† was charged to superintendent

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\* Here is the account of this great function given by Durjodhana to his father. "Judhisthira supports eighty-eight thousand *Snataka* Brahmans, who lead householder's life, by giving, each thirty maid-servants. Ten thousand other Brahmans daily eat richly cooked food from golden plates. The king of Kambhoja sent to him hundreds and thousands of black, darkish and red skins of the deer called *Kadali* and also blankets of excellent texture. Hundreds and thousands of female elephants, horses and cows, and also thirty thousand female camels are seen within his palace. The invited kings brought them as their tributes. I never heard or saw such enormous wealth as was brought to the Sacrifice of the son of Pandu. When no less than a *lac* of Brahmans were fed, it was arranged to notify the fact by blowing conchs in choruses. I continually heard such choruses. On every occasion it indicated that one *lac* of Brahmans had been fed."

† Dushasana was a brother of Durjodhana.



to commissariat arrangements. Ashwathama\* was requested to look after the Brahmans. Sanjaya† was appointed to welcome all the assembled kings. Kripa‡ was asked to take charge of the diamond, gold, pearls and gems, and to distribute them among the Brahmans and others. Vidura§ became the master of exchequer. Duryodhana became the receiver of tributes brought by the kings. Krishna, the central figure, was charged to protect and guard the Sacrifice.¶ Thus various works were assigned to the various chiefs, and the great ceremony began.¶¶

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\* Ashwathama was the son of Drona.

† Sanjaya was the favourite companion and minister of the old blind king Dhritarashtra.

‡ Kripa was the tutor of the Kuru princes.

§ Vidura was a brother of Dhritarashtra. See p. 169.

¶ Sloka 39, Chapter XLV, Sava Parva, Mahavarata, says :—"So long the great Sacrifice was not completed, the mighty armed Krishna guarded it with his bow *Saranga*." But Sloka 10, Chapter XXXV says :—"Krishna, the centre of all men, with the desire of gaining the excellent fruits, willingly took upon himself the task of washing the feet of the Brahmans."

¶¶ Sacrifices such as Rajsuya, Aswamedha &c. were all long ceremonies with various complicated rituals. It would be tedious reading if we describe them here. See *Salapata Brahmana* &c.





When the preliminary ceremonies were performed, then in that magnificent assembly of all that was best in India,—in that great congregation of wealth, heroism, and knowledge,—in that meeting of India's greatest chiefs and potentates, heroes and warriors, sages and Rishis, the Patriarch of the Kuru race, the great Bhishma, rose and said, "O Yudhisthira, now offer *Arghas*\* to the assembled guests as each deserves. The preceptors, the sacrificial priests, the relatives, the *Snatakas*, the friends and the kings,—these are the six classes of persons who deserve to receive *Arghas*. Bring *Arghas* for each of them, and let the *Argha* be presented first to him who is the foremost of all of them."

"O grandsire," said Yudhisthira, "whom amongst my guests do you consider to be the foremost? To whom shall the *Argha* be presented first?"

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\* In ancient India the offering of *Arghas* was one of the most prevalent customs. When a man wanted to honour another, he did it by offering him the *Argha*. In all ceremonies, such as marriages &c., i.e., in which a large number of people were invited, the host honoured his guests by presenting them. *Arghas* according to their order of precedence. *Argha* was made of a few things, such as sandal-paste, blades of grass, flowers &c. &c.



A low murmur rose all over that great assembly. People talked to their neighbours in a subdued tone,—each looked towards the other, and all became excessively eager to know what Bhishma would say. It was the assembly of the best and the foremost men of India,—the best and foremost both in arms and knowledge, virtue and learning,—it was an assembly in which a king was assuming the Imperial Dignity, thereby becoming the first of the foremost men of his age, but who was the foremost of all?

Bhishma rose, and a solemn silence fell over all. Every one was on the tiptoe of eagerness,—even the drop of a needle would have been heard in that assembly of thousands of men. Bhishma rose,—and in a voice as that of a trumpet said, “As the sun shines among all luminous objects, so shines Krishna among all men present here. Therefore, O Yudhisthira, the *Argha* should be first presented to him.”

Cheers after cheers rose from the various parts of the assembly, but a dissentient voice was not wanting. As thousands and thousands of men assembled loudly approved the words of Bhishma by their cheers, there were hundreds of others who



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disapproved them as uproariously. It was evident to all that a great crisis had arisen.\*

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\* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXXVI.





## CHAPTER XXVII

## SHISHUPALA'S ATTACK ON KRISHNA

THE mighty king of Chedi, the late generalissimo of the great Jarasandha, Shishupala, Krishna's own cousin,\* took the lead of opposition. He rose in anger; fire flashed from his eyes, and his hair stood on an end. In a voice as that of a roaring tiger, which at once hushed the assembled multitude, he thus addressed the old Patriarch of the Kuru race;—"When so many illustrious kings are present here, this man of the Vrisni race by no means deserves to have a royal worship. Your present conduct in wilfully making this man worshipped by the Pandavas is not worthy of the illustrious Kurus."†

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\* Shishupala was the son of Srutasrava, the third sister of Basudeva, Krishna's father. Krishna and Shishupala were of the same age, but Shishupala was very jealous of his cousin, and was ever on the alert to do him injury. In fact he considered him a great rival.

† All through chapters 37th to 45th, Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Shishupala's various abusive speeches are given. We have thought fit to quote only a few passages.



He then turned towards the five Pandavas and roared, "O sons of Pandu, you are children. You do not know what *Dharma*\* is. This Bhishma has but little knowledge, and therefore he has transgressed all the rules of Morality. How does this man, who is not a king,† deserve to be worshipped among these kings present here? O Yudhisthira, if you consider him to be the eldest, lo! here is Basudeva. How can his son be worshipped before him? If you consider him your well-wisher and supporter, why, when Drupada is here,—how can he get the first worship? If you consider him your preceptor, then, Drona is present here. If you consider him the greatest of all Veda-knowing men, what! the great Dwaipayana Vyasa is here. Well, old Bhishma whom you all revere, the great hero Ashwathama who is learned in every branch of

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\* *Dharma* literally means something akin to the word "nature," such as the *Dharma* of fire is "to burn," but here it means "morals and moral laws." *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* were the four most important factors in the religion of the ancient Hindus. We shall discuss them later on, when dealing with the great religion preached by Krishna.

† We have already said Krishna was not a king; old Ugrasena was the king of the Vrisnis. In fact Krishna and the race in which he was born lost the privilege of ascending the throne through a curse.



knowledge, the mighty king Durjodhana, the great preceptor Kripa, the invincible Bhismaka,\* the world-renowned bow-man Karna and a hundred other heroes, kings and learned men are present here. How can you offer this man the first worship when they are present? Krishna is neither a sacrificial priest, nor a preceptor, nor a king, how can you then give him the first *Argha*? If your intention, Yudhisthira, was to offer the first worship to this man, why were then these kings brought here thus to be insulted? We have not paid you tribute out of fear, or temptation, or conciliation. We have paid you tribute only because you desired to obtain the Imperial Dignity from virtuous motives. But you are now insulting us. What else could be your motive, except that of insulting us, for as in the midst of this assembly of kings, you have worshipped Krishna? Who will offer worship to one who has fallen from religion?"†

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\* Bhismaka was the king of Prag-Jotisha (Eastern India). He was one of the most powerful kings of the age in which Krishna was born.

† This charge indicates that Krishna did not follow the existing religion.





Foaming and roaring, Shishupala turned towards Krishna who was quietly sitting in one aside,—his ever sweet smiles playing upon his lips. But his silence exasperated the Chedi King. He turned towards him like an infuriated lion and said, "O Krishna, if these pitiable sons of Kunti are timid, if they have lost their manliness by asceticism,\* you ought to have enlightened them as to your claims to the first worship. How can you accept the worship of which you are not worthy? This is no insult to the kings,—it is you whom the Kurus have insulted."

Having said this, Shishupala left the excellent seat on which he was seated. He moved towards the gate of the assembly hall, but the king Yudhisthira hastened after him, and holding him by the hand, thus spoke to him, "O great king, what you have said does not become you. It is highly sinful and needlessly cruel. Do not insult Bhishma by erroneously thinking that he does not know what *Dharma* is. These numerous kings, who are all older than you, approve the worship offered to Krishna. You also should approve it. Bhishma knows

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\* This charge against the Pandavas evidently shows that they led a strictly moral life.



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well what Krishna is. You do not know him so well as he does."

Shishupala was again going to give vent to his uncontrollable wrath, but as the old hoary-headed Patriarch rose to address the assembly,—growling he sat down.



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## CHAPTER XXVIII

## BHISMA'S REPLY TO SHISHUPALA

THE old Bhishma then thus addressed the assembly, "He who does not approve of the worship offered to Krishna deserves neither soft words nor conciliation. I do not see any king in this assembly of monarchs who has not bowed his head to Krishna. I have worshipped many men who are old in knowledge. I have heard from all these wise men when they came and talked to me of the many accomplishments of Krishna. I have heard many times narrated by the people all the feats which the greatly intelligent Krishna performed since his birth. We do not worship Krishna only through caprice, or from our relationship with him, or from expected benefits to be received from him. He is worshipped by all the pious men on earth. We have offered him the first worship in consideration of his fame, his heroism, his success. There is none here, even though a child, whom we have not taken into our consideration when proposing the first worship to Krishna. There are





chiefly two reasons for offering the first worship to him. He is vastly learned in the Vedas and Vedangas; he is also very great in prowess. Who else is there in the world who is so distinguished as he? Liberality, cleverness, knowledge of the Vedas, bravery, modesty, achievements, intelligence, humility, beauty, firmness, contentment and prosperity,—all live for ever in Krishna."

The great Bhishma stopped; the inconceivable love for Krishna, that once pervaded the hearts of the stern cow-herds, maddened the simple Gopa boys and intoxicated the loving milk-maidens,—that had now cast a blissful halo over the Aryan Land,—overflowed his heart. His voice faltered,—his eyes softened,—his heart palpitated. Raising his voice to the highest pitch, he cried, "Yes we worship Krishna, because he is the Origin of the Universe, He is that in which the Universe is to be merged. He is unmanifested Primal Nature,—He is the Creator;—He is eternal,—He is beyond all creatures."\* The voice of the old Patriarch was choked,— he stopped,— he took

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\* It was for the first time declared by the great Patriarch Bhishma that Krishna was no other than the Incarnation of God. It was he who first declared it; and all the rest followed and follow till the present day.



breath,—he controlled his overflowing feelings,—his unknowable and unfathomable love for Krishna.

After a few moments, he turned towards the kings and said, "Therefore, O friends, you should approve the worship offered to him. Shishupala is a mere child. He does not know who Krishna is. He always speaks ill of him. Who is there among the old or the young, among these illustrious kings, who does not consider Krishna worthy of the first worship? We do adore him. If Shishupala considers this worship undeserved, he may do what pleases him."

Shishupala leaped up like a mass of blazing fire. "Old and infamous wretch as you are," he roared, "are you not ashamed of your conduct?"

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\* In reading the life of Srikrishna our readers must not lose sight of one point,—that there is no direct biographical account of Krishna in the Mahavarata. It is however the only work in which we get some glimpses of his career when he was living in Dwarka. Therefore in knowing him, we must look to those of his contemporaries whose history Mahavarata is. In order to fully appreciate him, we must first understand the sublime characters of some of the men in the Mahavarata, such as Bhishma, Vidura and others. We find that a man like Bhishma was the first to declare him to be not only the first man of his age, but as the Supreme Deity n



## BHISMA'S REPLY TO SHISHUPALA

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Wishing to praise Krishna, you describe him before me as great and superior in knowledge and age, as if I know nothing! 'This man is the foremost of all wise men,' and 'This man is the Lord of the Universe,' hearing your these words, Krishna believes that they are all true. Nothing could be a greater lie. Surely do you live at the mercy of these kings!" The old Patriarch rose again.

human form,—a character in which he is still adored and worshipped all over India. As we do not possess any direct biographical accounts of Krishna, we are not at all in a position to judge him and his character; for we get very few incidents of his life and little of his teachings to form our opinion of him, if we are at all capable of doing it. But Bhishma was great in age, knowledge, experience, learning and virtue; in fact he was a personage whose equal may hardly be found in the history of any part of the world. It would therefore be proper for us to follow great Bhishma to understand Srikrishna. As our ancestors have unfortunately left no direct history of the greatest Man on earth, it would be our duty to know him through others who saw his deeds, who heard his teachings, who associated with him, and who knew him best. Bhishma, Vidura and others saw him and knew him well,—and it was they who declared him not only to be the first man of his age, but the Supreme One Incarnate. Those of our readers who do not understand Krishna as Bhishma did, to them we say, as Yudhisthira said to Shishupala, "Bhishma knows well what Krishna is. You do not know him so well as he does."





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"Truly," said he, "do I live at the mercy of kings! But I do not consider them as worth a straw."

Thus addressed by Bhishma, the kings became exceedingly angry. Some amongst them stood erect, some began to abuse him and others cried, "This sinful wretch Bhishma, though old, is exceedingly boastful. He deserves no pardon. Let this wicked man be killed like an animal, or let him be burnt in a fire made of straw."

Availing himself of this opportunity, Shishupala turned to the kings and said, "When I am here to be your general, what are you thinking now? In battle array let us stand against the Vrisnis and the Pandavas." Many of the kings said, "Yes, we must act in such a way as the final sacrificial rites to be performed by Yudhisthira and this worship of Krishna may not be supposed to have our acquiescence." They then all began to consult how to obstruct the completion of the Sacrifice. "It became evident," the ancient chronicler says, "that the undeteriorating vast sea of kings with its countless waves of soldiers was making preparations for a fight. Having seen that assembly of kings agitated by anger, as the fearful ocean is lashed by the wind at the



time of the universal dissolution, Yudhisthira thus spoke to that foremost of all intelligent men, the grandsire of the Kurus, the aged Bhishma ;—‘This vast ocean of kings has been agitated by wrath. O Grandsire,’ tell me what should be now done ?’ ‘O best of the Kurus,’ replied the old Patriarch, ‘do not be alarmed. Can a dog kill the lion ? These kings are merely barking at the sleeping lion of the Vrishni race.’”

He then turned towards the assembled kings and said, “O rulers of earth, I do not see the end of our speeches, for words may be answered with words. Therefore listen to what I say. Here is Krishna present. Him have we worshipped. Let him who opposes this worship challenge him to a fight. This will settle the matter without further ado.”

Roaring and foaming the wrathful Shishupala rose and cried, “O Krishna, I challenge you. Come fight with me till I kill you with all the Pandavas.”



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## CHAPTER XXXIX

## THE DEATH OF SHISHUPALA

SLOWLY and majestically rose Krishna, his sweet smiles still playing on his lips. There was no anger,—not even the slightest displeasure,—in his heart. When a tempest was raging all around him,—when the strongest abuses were showered upon him by the angry shishupala, and the highest encomiums were given him by the great Bhishma,—he sat quite unconcerned. But now being challenged to fight, he, as a warrior, could no longer hold his peace. Calmly rose he, and then addressed the assembled kings thus.\* “O kings, this cruel-hearted man is born of a lady of our race, but he is our great enemy. Though we never seek to injure him, yet he always tries to do us harm. Hearing that we had gone to the city of Prag-jotisha,† this man of cruel deeds came and burnt our city of

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\* See *Malavarata*, §Sava Parva, Chap. XLV., Slokas 6—14.

† Eastern India. Perhaps it refers to the war that Krishna waged with king Naraka. See our note in page 163





Dwarka, though he was the son of my aunt. When the Bhoja king\* was sporting on the Raivataka hill, this man killed many of that king's attendants and carried away many in chains to his own city. In order to thwart my father's Sacrifice, this sinful man stole the horse of the *Ashamedha*.† This man of sin stole the wife of the saintly Akrura when she was on her way to the country of the Sauvaras. This wretch ravished in the disguise of the king of Karusha the pious Bhadra, the princess of Vishala, who was the intended bride of the Karusha king. I have patiently borne all his sins and crimes for the sake of my father's sister,— I promised her to pardon his one hundred offences. That number is now full. It is fortunate that all this had happened to-day in the presence of all the kings of India. I shall no longer pardon him; I shall kill him in the presence of you all." Shishupala roared, "O Krishna, if you please, pardon

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\* One of the Aryan clans of Mathurā was called the Bhojas.

† Horse-Sacrifice. A horse is let loose in this ceremony. It roamed over the country for a certain time. A warrior with an army followed it as its guard, and if any body caught it or stole it, a battle was fought with him. The horse was finally brought back and sacrificed with due rites.



me or pardon me not. What can you do to me through good will or anger?"

The great sacrificial ground became the arena of an extraordinary tournament. The universal joy and merriment soon turned into a general grief and anxiety. Yudhisthira's countenance was a picture of misery,—Bhishma grinded his teeth in anger,—Arjuna sorrowfully rose to arrange the field,—but great Bhishma was full of joy and pride, for he knew it would be a mere child's play for Krishna to defeat and kill the sinful Chedi king.

Every thing was soon arranged for the great combat. The charioteers of Krishna and Shishupala brought their respective cars. The great generalissimo of the imperial army of Jarasandha and the greatest hero of the age, armed themselves with their bows and arrows and entered the list. Thousands and thousands of men who had come to see the great Sacrifice hastened now to witness this wonderful tournament. Calm and cool stood Krishna, till the same sweet smiles played on the same beautiful lips,—handsome and charming as ever. In his front foamed and roared the wrathful Shishupala,—a giant with fire flashing from his eyes. All hearts palpitated,—all were in anxiety and eagerness.



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But the combat though severe was but short. Shishupala's head soon rolled on the ground, and those kings that backed him were struck dumb with fear. They silently returned to their respective abodes and dared not utter a word against Krishna or against the Pandavas.\*

\* There are two different versions of this incident in the Mahavarata. Sava Parva, Chap. XII., slokas 21—26, says : "When Shishupala was thus talking, the high-souled slayer of Madhu (Krishna) pondered in his mind on the discus that humbled the pride of the Daityas. As soon as the discus came into his hands, that skilful speaker, the high-souled Krishna thus loudly spoke, 'O rulers of earth, hear why this man has been hitherto pardoned by me. Asked by his mother I promised to pardon his one hundred offences. This was the boon that she asked of me and this was the boon that I granted her. O kings, that number has now become full. I shall now kill him in the presence of the kings.' Having said this, the chief of the Yadu race, that chastiser of foes, Krishna, immediately cut off in anger with his discus the head of the Chedi king. That heavy-armed hero fell like a cliff struck by thunder. The kings saw a fearful effulgence from the body of the Chedi king issuing like that of the sun in the sky. That effulgence then adored the lotus-eyed Krishna ever worshipped by all the worlds ; and it then entered Krishna's body."

But in Udyoga Parva, Chap. XXII., Slokas 27-29, we find king Dhritarashtra thus describes the incident. "Formerly





Undisturbed and unobstructed the great Sacrifice was then completed. The invited guests began to disperse. The ancient chronicler goes on to say :—"Thereupon all the kings came to the virtuous Judhishthira and said, 'Sire, you have grown in prosperity through good fortune. You have now acquired the Imperial Dignity. The fame of the Ajamira\* race has been greatly enhanced by you. You have acquired great religious merit by this act. O best of kings, we tell you that we have been welcomed and received by you to our heart's content. We now desire to return to our own kingdoms. Give us permission to go.' Having heard what they said, the virtuous Judhishthira worshipped

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in the Rajsuya Sacrifice, the king of Chedi, Krishna, and also other rulers of earth assembled with innumerable warriors. Amongst them all, the Chedi king was most powerful; he was the greatest bow-man and an invincible warrior in battle. Within a short time the exalted Krishna defeated him and damped the courage of the other kings. Seeing the lion-like Krishna on his chariot, the kings that followed the rulers of the Kartushas in the honouring of the Chedi king, fled in fear like so many deer. When they escaped, Krishna easily killed Shishupala, and thus enhanced the glory of the Pandavas." Of the two accounts we have accepted the more reasonable one.

\* Ajamira was one of the ancestors of the Kuru kings.



them as each deserved and then commanded his brothers thus : 'All these kings have come to us of their own accord. They are now desirous of returning to their kingdoms. Escort them to the confines of our dominions'."

When they were all gone, Krishna came to Yudhisthira and said, "Sire, with your permission I shall now go to Dwarka." "O Krishna," replied the king, "through your grace I have performed this great Sacrifice. Through your grace all the kings have come under my sway. O sinless One, how can I give you permission to go? But I know you must return to your own city."

Krishna then went to his aunt Kunti and said, "your sons have assumed the Imperial Dignity. They have obtained vast wealth. Be pleased with all this. With your permission I shall now return to Dwarka." He then bade farewell to Draupadi and Subhadra. Then coming out of the inner apartment, he performed his ablution and daily rites of worship, the Brahmans uttering benedictions. Daruka\* then brought his chariot. The highsouled and lotus-eyed

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\* Daruka, was Krishna's Charioteer.



Krishna walked round it, and then ascended it, and started for the city of Daravati.\*

\* After this, there is virtually no history of Krishna for the space of thirteen years,—the period Judhisthira and his brothers passed in exile. As soon as Krishna went away, the five Pandavas were exiled by their cousins the Kurus by various stratagems. Mahavarata being not his history, the author has almost written nothing about him when the Pandavas were roving in the forests. The accounts of their wanderings have been given in the Vana Parva of the Mahavarata. Almost whole, we may very well say, the entire Vana Parva that we now possess is an after-interpolation. A little careful study will show it,—so different is the style of writing, the form of narration,—the modern touch of the language.

We meet Krishna three times in the Vana Parva (1) He with the other Vrisnis came to see the Pandavas on hearing their exile. Krishna here gives an account of his war with Salya who had a car that floated in the sky. It is altogether an extraordinary, and we may add, a ridiculous story and can by no means be taken seriously. (2) We see him again with the Pandavas in the forest. The wrathful Rishi Durvasha with ten thousand disciples were mischievously sent by the wicked Durjodhana to the forest-abode of the Pandavas. He thought the Pandu princes would not be able to feed in the forest Durvasha with ten thousand disciples, and the result would be that they would be burnt down through the angry Rishi's curse. The Rishi appeared when the Pandavas had nothing to feed him with and his followers. Draupadi





innumerable men as a great prophet,—a supernatural being,—nay\* the Supreme One Incarnate. Living in distant Dwarka in his city on the sea, Krishna ruled over the hearts of the Aryan Land.† The greatest heroes and the most powerful potentates had bowed down their heads before his great prowess and supreme statesmanship; the most illustrious Rishis and sages, learned scholars and great ascetics had all given him the first place for his supernatural intelligence, his wonderful learning, his great piety,—his superhumanity in every thing.

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possess some. Krishna went to heaven, and fought with Indra, the king of heaven. After defeating him, he presented innumerable *Parijatas* to his wife.

They also give the accounts of many wars that Krishna waged and the many battles that he fought. We have mentioned some of them in page 163-164.

But we must mention here that at this time Krishna had become a father. His eldest son was named Pradumna. But the Puranas say that he had many thousands of sons from his many hundreds of wives. They also mention that one of his sons Samba married the daughter of Durjodhana. See our note in pages 156-157.

\* Bhisma was the greatest man of that age. We have seen that even he considered Krishna to be an Incarnation of the Supreme Being.

† See Mahavārata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter XXXIV., Slokas 10-29.



The masses had been carried away by an undescribable love for him,—the love the reason where of they did not know.\* The sinful were terribly afraid of him,—the pious were his loving devotees. A new thought, a new religion, a new happiness now rolled over the land of the Aryans from one end to the other.

The rule of such tyrants as Kansa, Shishupala, Jarasandha and others had been replaced by that of such a pious and virtuous ruler as Yudhisthira. The little kingdom of love and devotion, beauty and sublimity, that Krishna founded in the beautiful forests of *Vrindavana* had now extended far and wide,—from the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the dense forests in the south, from the *Vrindavana* city of Dwarka in the west to Bhismaka's great kingdom in the east.

He was a great Mystery to all, but all the same the people loved him with all their heart. They worshipped and adored him, they feared and respected him, they called him God, preceptor, father, protector and friend.

But what sort of life did Krishna himself lead? He was the greatest warrior who had defeated all others; he was the most powerful general, commanding the mighty army of the

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\* See Vagavata, Skanda X., Chap. 60th, Sloka 20.



## CHAPTER XXX

## KRISHNA THE GREATEST OF THE GREAT

THE cow-herd boy of *Vrindavana* had now become the greatest of all men in India. He had been adored and worshipped by

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in this dire distress piteously prayed to Krishna to come and save the Pandavas. Krishna came as soon as thought of. He ate only a portion of greens that lay in the corner of the cooking pot in which Draupadi had cooked. By his doing this, Durvasha and his ten thousand pupils, who had gone to bathe, felt their stomach so heavy that they thought they were quite incapable of eating even a morsel more. They therefore did not return to the Pandavas, but went away in another direction. (3) We meet Krishna once more in the *Vana Parva*. Some colloquys follow, but there is nothing important in them.

This is all the history that we get of Krishna in *Mahavarata* during the period that the Pandavas were in exile. We have already said, the accounts that *Vishnu Purana*, *Harivansa*, *Vagavata* and other Puranas give are so palpable fictions that they can by no means be taken into serious account. They say many things no doubt, but they are all of the order,—an example of which we give below.

Once upon a time *Satyabhama*, one of the wives of Krishna, saw the celestial flower *Parijata* and longed to





Claras; he was the greatest statesman, the adviser of the great king Yudhisthira and of the monarchs of *Aryavarta*; he was the great diplomat who had brought all the quarrelling Aryan chiefs under one pious Emperor, thus bringing in peace and happiness to the millions of persecuted and down-trodden men; he was the greatest of all learned men, whom the great Rishis revered; he was the great religious teacher who had introduced a wonderful religion amongst the Aryan races, thereby raising them to the highest status of civilisation; he was the great centre from which flowed all love, all beauty and sublimity, all happiness and bliss. But he himself led a very simple life. He said, "I am indifferent alike to my home and body. I am happy in my own self."\* Living always in the whirlpool of worldly affairs, he was the greatest ascetic that was ever born in the world. He was a Master over Matter as well as Spirit. He ruled over both, and therefore he was superhuman. Wherever he lived, it was a land of joy

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\* What did Krishna mean by "I am happy in my own self?" *Chhandagya Upanishad* say :—He, who seeing this, believing this, is deep in his own self, who sports with his own self, whose friend and companion is his own self, whose self is his only pleasure, is the king of himself."



and merriment, and wherever he went, people felt an undescribable bliss and happiness. He had maddened all India, as he once did the little *Vrindavana* and Mathura.

He was Nature personified. He was as high, stern, hard and majestic as the Himalayas ; he was as humble, soft, sweet and sublime as the *Jamuna*. He was as fearful as the roaring tempest cracking the tallest trees ; he was as lovely and charming as the sweet moon-beam playing on the blossoming flowers. What was he ? The men that saw him did not know him,—how could we ?

Thus did He live in Dwarka,—the greatest Man of all men living. Adored and worshipped by all,—universally loved and feared, respected and obeyed, His was a towering Personality,—a wonderful Man among men ; but yet He was a great Mystery,—none could understand Him, nor His works, nor His teachings, nor what and who He was. His Life and His Teachings were the Beacon Light that guided,—and will ever guide,—the humanity to the ever-lasting and of Bliss.



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PART I

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